



THE INDEPENDENT

No 8248 WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 1997 WEATHER: Cloudy early; fine everywhere later (IR45p) 40p

Election '97

INSIDE: WHAT ABOUT NEIL HAMILTON?
MORE BAD NEWS FOR THE MAN WHO
TOOK THE BISCUIT.
ON THE STUMP: 'PREMIER' BLAIR

Taking from Desmond Pitcher and giving to Poplar Joe: Labour's big idea?



Worlds apart: Sir Desmond Pitcher (left), chairman of United Utilities, epitomises the privatised industry chiefs who would be hit by a windfall tax proposed by Labour. Joe Vassallo, 19, stands for the intended beneficiaries. He lives in Poplar, east London, left school at 16 and has had more than one job. His last was as a screen-printer. He was sacked six months ago, he says, for taking time off when his mother was ill. Photographs: Andre Camara/John Voos

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Labour plans to impose a windfall tax on privatised industry fat-cats to finance a £3bn programme to take 250,000 unemployed young people off the dole was condemned out of hand by the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday.

But on the first full day of election campaigning Tony Blair warned that the do-nothing alternative threatened the creation of an alienated under-class. "If the Conservatives had come up with proposals such as this, people would have said, 'This is a revolution'."

A Labour brief on the job-creation policy said: "We must never again see a generation of people abandoned, to earn nothing and learn nothing."

But Kenneth Clarke, the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, said last night: "The latest windfall tax fiasco again shows that Labour are not fit to govern."

"Instead of saying which companies would pay the windfall tax, Labour are playing an absurd game, giving journalists a clue and daring them to work out the answer for themselves."

"This is no way to run a tax policy. Labour's refusal to come clean on which companies would be hit and how heavily, leaves millions of shareholders and pensioners in the dark. Without this basic information, people have no chance of working out how the windfall tax would hit their own investments or pensions."

"The conclusion from Labour's windfall-tax fiasco is clear: you can't trust a shadow chancellor who refuses to answer the key questions on tax."

Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, announced at Labour's election press conference that Mr Blair would be appointing a new Cabinet minister with responsibility for employment and labour-market flexibility, which would include Social Chapter negotiations with European partners.

But the party also prompted the Chancellor's outrage by delivering its first list of candidates for the one-off £3bn windfall levy, which - depending on the definition of excess profits - could apply to British Telecom, water, gas and electricity companies, the British Airports Authority and privatised railway companies, but not British Airways.

However, in the absence of a definitive list of Labour targets for the tax, Mr Clarke said at the Conservatives' election

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press conference: "How can you trust a shadow prime minister and a shadow chancellor who will not answer the straight question about which companies will pay the tax, when they obviously know who they intend to target?"

He also attacked Labour's job-creation package.

"Gordon Brown says he will create 250,000 jobs by a one-off tax. That is a dreadfully old-fashioned method of claiming to create jobs."

"Since the day when Gordon Brown first promised to create 250,000 places on schemes for young people, we have seen 400,000 extra jobs created in the

enterprise economy." The Chancellor said unemployment had been reduced by almost 1 million since its December 1992 peak, but he was unable to tell the *Independent* whether unemployment had risen or fallen since Mr Major became Prime Minister in 1990.

Unemployment was 1,778,000 in November 1990, when Mr Major took office, and it had not fallen below that figure since.

Ian McCartney, Labour's employment spokesman, said later: "The truth is that the only jobs Tory ministers really care about are their own."

In a prepared statement on

the Government's economic policy, Mr Clarke said at his press conference: "Today, Britain is booming, without going bust."

"We have unlocked Britain's potential and over the next five years we intend to make sure Britain realises that potential ..."

"By contrast, Labour's great leap backwards into social democracy would put Britain's future at risk."

"It would be an escape from reality, a holiday from history which this nation cannot afford."

Later, Mr Blair opened up a second battle-front when he used Commons question time to tackle Mr Major on health-authority deficits.

With health a prime concern for the voters, Mr Blair said it was a "tragedy and a disgrace" that after 18 years of Tory government, waiting-lists were up,

hospitals were suffering from cash and staff shortages and non-emergency surgery was being cancelled.

The Prime Minister pointed out that only the Tories were committed to increasing funding, year-on-year, through the next Parliament, and he added: "Labour may have set up the health service but we have built it up."

Labour later issued a list of nine health authorities for which the Conservatives claimed "real growth" in budgets for 1997-98 would not cover the 1996-97 deficit.

The authorities falling into that crisis category were: Bradford; Ealing; Hammersmith and Hounslow; Leeds; North and East Devon; North Cumbria; North Essex; Wakefield; West Surrey; and Wiltshire.

Mr Major said that Labour's figures were blown out of all

Still time to register

There are only two days left until the voting registration deadline.

Electoral registration offices of councils around the country will be open until the close of business tomorrow. To register, potential voters must be able to show proof of an address (from a gas or phone bill, for example) which dates back to October 1996.

proportion, that the forecast deficit was a small proportion of the overall NHS budget.

The last Prime Minister's question time of the Parliament will be staged tomorrow, with the current Parliament rising for good on Friday.

QUICKLY

BBC board 'amateurs'
A committee of MPs has condemned the BBC Board of Governors as a bunch of part-time amateurs threatening the future of the Corporation. Page 6

Unemployment worry
Unemployment is the biggest worry of the British, according to a new survey, although concerns about education and the health service mark them out from the rest of Europe. Page 3

German rampage
The German army's long march to international respectability suffered a reverse in the small town of Detmold on Monday night, as 10 of its soldiers marked out for peace-keeping duty staged a mini-pogrom. Showing "Wages out of Germany", the conscripts in combat helmets rampaged through the centre in search of foreigners, attacking a 16-year-old Italian boy and two Turkish youths with baseball bats, knives and spades. Page 13

CIA nominee backs out
The surprise withdrawal of Anthony Lake, nominee to head the Central Intelligence Agency, is a large embarrassment for President Clinton, another body-blow for the demoralised CIA - but above all proof of how the campaign fundraising row has bred a bitter partisanship that is poisoning politics and government in the United States. Page 14

Asia's financial crisis
The Asian financial crisis has spread to Hong Kong, where the Hong Kong dollar is under pressure. Page 15

Thirty-two simple ways to describe a woman (if you'll pardon our French)

John Lichfield
Paris

Here is your first lesson in the French that they do not teach in school. Even in France, *Elle est vraiment Marquise. Elle a des très grands airs*. In the youth slang of the French *banlieues*, or inner suburbs, this translates approximately as: "She is a real bombshell. She has enormous boobs."

French is a sublimely beautiful language, so beautiful that some French people believe it should be wrapped in tissue paper and hidden away in a drawer.

This is not the view of Jean-Pierre Goudaillier, professor of linguistics at the Sorbonne, who has published the first dictionary of words torn directly from the mouths, the rap songs and the graffiti of the *banlieues* of the 1990s.

Mr Goudaillier says his purpose is not to judge whether or not French is being deformed by such words. He says he undertook the work in order to study the "dynamics" of an "evolving language."

But the professor has clearly fallen in love with the bewildering richness of

contemporary youth slang in urban France, drawn partly from English, partly from the old French *argot*, but increasingly from Arabic and North and West African languages.

The dictionary is called *Comment, tu t'habilles, which translates, rather loosely as: "How you can gab" or "How you can rap."* The verb *t'habiller* meaning to "talk without saying very much", derived from a Spanish word via Algerian Arabic - is at the heart of life in the violence-haunted and job-free suburbs, according to Mr Goudaillier.

The greatest badge of honour for a young suburb-dweller is to be a good *tchatcheur* or *flûteur* or *pipeuteur*.

The book records eight different ways of saying *bloke*: *hamster, gadjo, kauri, lascar, nombo, payo, raclo* and *scarlo*. But, doubtless reflecting a brutally male-oriented culture, there are 32 ways of saying woman with varying degrees of politeness: *meuf, belette, caille, charnelle, clira, dama, damoche, dig, fatma, fêbousse, feumeu, filasse, gadji, gavallo, gazelle* ... and so on.

A beautiful woman is a *Miro-*

roa after the site of the French nuclear bomb tests. A not especially well-endowed woman is a *Findus*, after the company which makes frozen fish fast food. Her opposite would have large *airbags*, *anusus*, *hazels* or *novers*.

Here is an example of a complete sentence collected by Mr Goudaillier direct from the *banlieue*: "Cette meuf, elle est tellement maigre, elle a pas d'airbags, qu'on peut la fêter."

This translates, rather lamely, as "that bird is so thin. She has no boobs. You could fux her."

People's army scores victory over British

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has scored a decisive victory over the British Army. The battleground, never before traversed by the two armed forces, was a rugby pitch in Hong Kong where the PLA triumphed by 12 points to 7.

The Chinese will arrive in Hong Kong in three months time, replacing the British as the garrison. Could the British side, largely composed of members of the 1st Battalion of the Black

Watch, have been diplomatically letting the incoming military side score a victory?

Absolutely not, insisted the battalion's commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Alasdair Loudon. "We wanted to win - you could see by the tackles," he said.

All the worse for them, then. China is hardly one of the world's leading rugby-playing nations, though the PLA is reported to regard the sport as "good training". The Chinese side was drawn from the PLA Sports Institute in Guangzhou,

currently one of the few teams in the country. Seasoned rugby watchers declared them to be the fitter team, though Col Loudon thought not. But "they have two million men to choose from, we have just five hundred", he declared.

It is indeed true that the British garrison is being run down to a shadow of its former self, though it is not clear how many men China intends to station in Hong Kong.

For while the British and Chinese troops were battling it out on a green field in the cen-

tre of Hong Kong, British and Chinese diplomats in London were preparing for another round of negotiations on the stationing of Liberation Army troops in the colony prior to the transfer of sovereignty on 30 June.

The victory in yesterday's sporting encounter may therefore be seen as something more than symbolic, although both sides were keen to suggest that it was nothing more than a game - which would make it about as non-political as the Olympic Games.



Losing battle: A Brit is tackled

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news

significant shorts

Legal aid victory in battle for equal right to ride

Two women fighting a court battle to be part of a centuries-old all-male riding festival have been granted legal aid. Mandy Graham, 21, and Ashley Simpson, 24, are challenging a decision to ban them from last year's Hawick Common Riding Festival, saying the decision was unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

They have already been granted £2,500 by the Equal Opportunities Commission to proceed with their case. And yesterday Sheriff Brian Donald was told that they had also been granted legal aid for their battle. The sheriff was hearing legal arguments from lawyers representing the women and last year's riding committee at Jedburgh sheriff court in the Scottish Borders. After listening to six hours of argument, he reserved judgment on the matter. He is expected to issue a written decision in the next few weeks and could recommend that the matter goes to a full hearing with witnesses being called.

Hepatitis victim asked to give blood

Ireland's blood transfusion authority sought a blood donation from a woman diagnosed two years earlier as infected with the hepatitis C virus by one of the service's own plasma products. The revelation yesterday came just days after a damning report was published into the scandal of how 970 mothers were infected by plasma made from 1976 donations from a woman known to have jaundice.

Rock star speaks up for boat victim



Pete Townshend of The Who told a High Court judge in London yesterday of the "exceptional" style and virtuosity of a saxophonist whose career was destroyed by the Marchioness disaster.

Jo Wells was rescued after spending three minutes under water when the River Thames pleasure cruiser collided with the sand dredger, *Bowdell*, in August 1989. She escaped with minor injuries, but her "glittering" life performing "at the high level" with top rock acts including Tears for Fears and the Communards came to an end.

The owners of the *Bowdell* and *Marchioness* have accepted liability for the tragedy, but are contesting the amount of compensation, claiming that Ms Wells was burned out before the accident and had not played professionally for 18 months.

Townshend (below), who employed her as a session musician in 1986, told the judge yesterday that Ms Wells could have looked forward to a career at the top of her profession earning up to £3,000 a week.

"Jo really stuck in my mind. She was absolutely exceptional both technically and imaginatively."

"She was the best soprano saxophone player I have ever heard in pop an unassuming figure who burst into life when she was playing. I was quite intimidated by her, how good she was," he said.

Family says Congo death 'stupid'

The brother of a British surgeon shot dead in the Congo said last night that the family were reeling last night at the "stupidity" of the tragedy. Ben Dalton, 29, from south London, was gunned down after a row with a policeman. As his parents flew out to the Congo, Mr Dalton's brother Will, 26, said that the family hoped that the killer would be found. But he dismissed as "unbelievable" a suggestion that the row with the policeman had been sparked by his brother, on a holiday trip with his wife and British friends, refusing to pay a small bribe.

Africa tale wins Orwell prize

A revealing story of childhood and adolescence in southern Africa during a time of acute social and political crisis has won the 1996 Orwell Prize for literature. Peter Godwin's *Mukwa: a White Boy in Africa*, describes childhood in Rhodesia, youth as an officer in the British South Africa police and adulthood as a young journalist in Zimbabwe. The Orwell Prize judges called it a "shrewd and wry examination of the conflict and confusion inherent in growing up in late twentieth century Africa". Members of the George Orwell Memorial Fund, who have hosted the £1,000 prize since 1992, presented the awards last night at London's Reform Club.

Matthew Brace

Drivers told to run trains past body

Up to twenty drivers were ordered to take their trains past the body of a young woman who was lying between the tracks, it has been revealed. Union officials claimed drivers were "traumatised" by the incident on Great Eastern's Shenfield to Southend line in Essex on 6 February this year.

It was nearly four hours before her body was removed. Aslef general secretary Lew Adams claimed that trains were not stopped because this would have meant Great Eastern would have faced penalty payments. But a Great Eastern spokeswoman said the company kept running the trains to avoid rush-hour delays.

Randeep Ramesh

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British biggest worriers in Europe on schools

Jojo Moyes

Unemployment is the biggest worry of the British, according to a new survey, although concerns about education and the health service mark them out from the rest of Europe.

The most-cited domestic concerns in yesterday's Mori poll "What's worrying Britain", are those which will top the campaigns of the political parties in the run up to the election - unemployment, crime, education, the health service, the economy and the European Union.

But results for the Europe-wide survey for Population

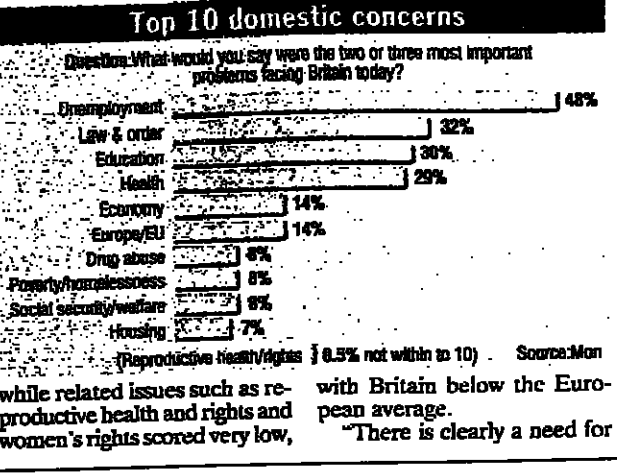
Concern and Marie Stopes International, one of the largest of its kind ever undertaken - show clear contrasts between the fears of Britons and those of Europe as a whole.

Nearly half of Britons (48 per cent) gave unemployment as their biggest concern - significantly less than the 59 per cent of people across Europe. Fears about jobs are most prominent in Finland (85 per cent), France and Sweden (78 per cent), and Germany and Spain (more than 70 per cent).

But law and order was a much bigger concern than elsewhere in Europe, cited by al-

most a third (32 per cent) of British respondents compared with 20 per cent across the Continent. Education is also a much bigger worry for Britons than elsewhere in Europe, with 30 per cent of Britons naming it as their main concern, compared to just 6 per cent elsewhere. The state of schools does not make the EU top ten list of issues.

But it is responses to the questions about global concerns which have worried the two charities behind the survey. The issue of population increase is the eighth most pressing concern for Europeans,



a sustained European-wide campaign to raise awareness about population issues and the rights of all people to access reproductive health care and good family planning," said Patricia Hindmarsh of Marie Stopes International.

Population growth scored 12 per cent in Britain and the EU, but related issues like reproductive health, gender rights and adolescent sexuality are rated by little more than one per cent of the representative sample of 937 British adults. Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases get a 14 per cent global concern rating across the EU, compared

with just 3 per cent in Britain. Child sex abuse worries 2 per cent of Britons, almost the lowest figure in the EU. The proportion is highest (18 per cent) in Belgium, scene of high-level scandals over paedophile rings.

Wendy Thomas, director of Population Concern, said the figures showed that a welcome 71 per cent of Britons backed more general family planning advice for developing countries.

But the proportion seeing the need for young people in those countries to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy was only an "alarming" 42 per cent.

"With close to half the pop-

ulation of many poor countries under the age of 15, the neglect of young people's sexual and reproductive health worldwide is a crisis in the making that will hamstring other development efforts," she said.

Topics which worry the British less than their neighbours across the Channel include the economy, drug abuse, race relations and AIDS. Two out of five Britons and Europeans agree that war and civil conflict is the main problem. Environment and pollution, famine, poverty and unemployment also get high ratings across the EU.

Publishing wizard fights to rescue his exploded books

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Dorling Kindersley, whose illustrated books and, more recently, CD-Roms have delighted children and their thankful parents for two decades, has become the latest innovative British company to discover that beautiful products alone will not conquer America.

Citing a flood of critical acclaim for its books and compact discs, Dorling Kindersley insisted yesterday its 23-year success story would continue, but it admitted that problems in the United States had pushed it off track after years of rapid growth.

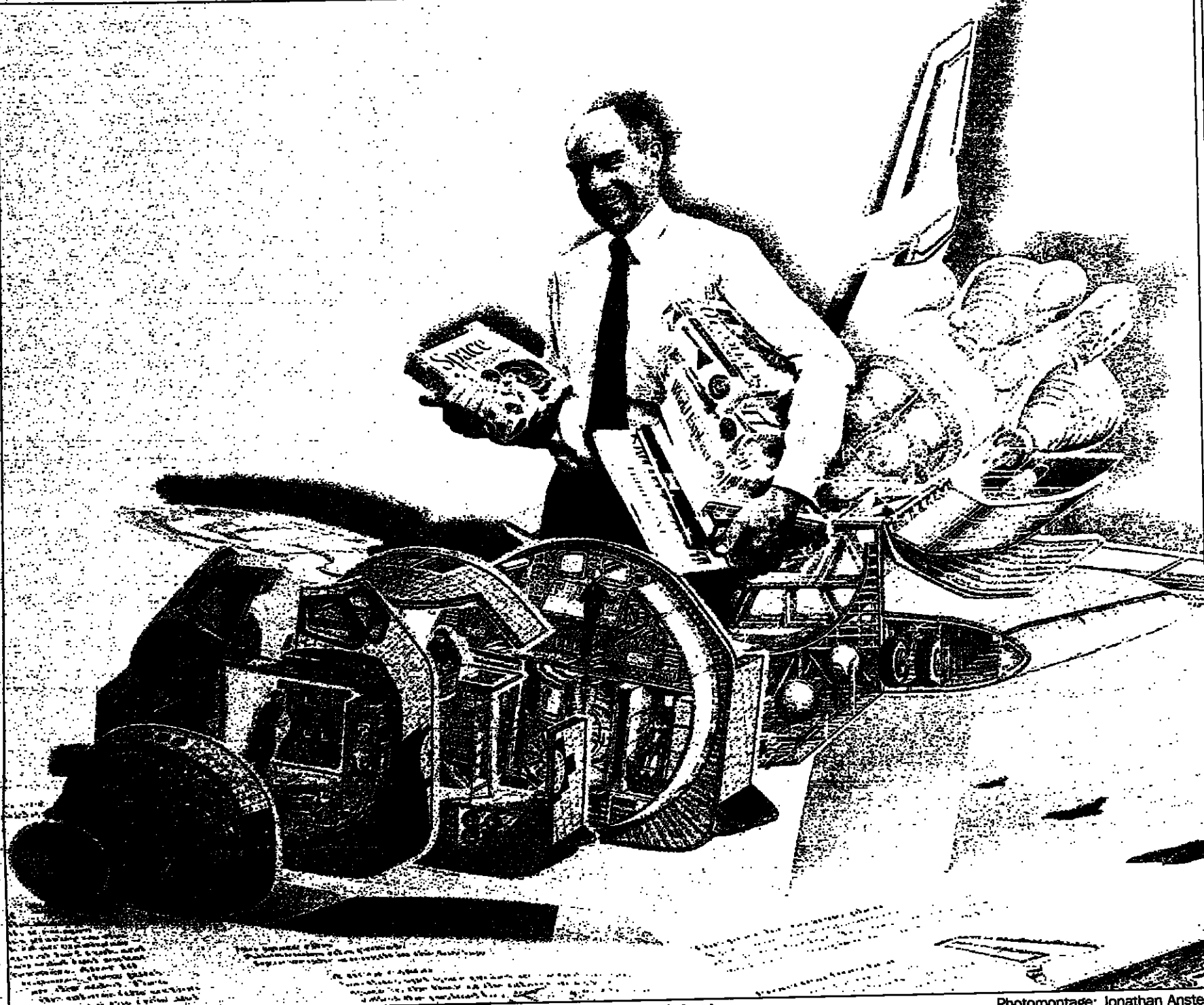
Echoes of previous high-fliers such as Sock Shop that crashed to earth in the US have sent investors in the company rushing for the exit and Dorling Kindersley joins a long list of stars over here that have failed to shine over there.

Peter Kindersley, the company's multi-millionaire founder, remained defiantly positive yesterday despite causing consternation in the City with a warning that American profits, which have driven the company's dramatic recent growth, were flagging.

Shrugging off a fall of almost £100m in his family's private fortune over the past year, thanks to a collapse in the value of its shares in DK, Mr Kindersley painted a bright future which the flow of middle class favourites like *The Royal Horticultural Society's Plant Encyclopedia* and this year's star launch, an interactive children's CD-Rom encyclopedia, will continue unabated.

Dorling Kindersley, which despite becoming one of Britain's biggest companies still operates from a collection of elegant town houses in London's Covent Garden, proved yesterday it is better at pleasing children than the City's unsentimental fund managers. Its shares which cost 645p a year ago were worth only 270p yesterday after the company told investors for the second time in three months that its profits would be worse than expected.

But the company insisted its problems were one-off blips and nothing to do with its products which remain popular. It blamed the soaring pound for reducing the value of its overseas profits and an upheaval among US booksellers which has seen giant chains like



High-flyer: Peter Kindersley is hoping that the company he created is not about to crash land

Barnes & Noble reducing their stocks of books and CD-Roms to try and stem heavy losses.

Founded in 1974 by Peter Kindersley and his partner Christopher Dorling, DK began by creating high-quality practical reference books, almost exclusively for adults. From the outset, the company's books stood out from their rivals by focusing on elegantly presented images at the expense of text and immediate public acclaim made a handful of titles in the 1970s million-copy best-sellers.

DK's most successful book to date, the *Family Medical Guide* has sold more than 6 million copies in 15 languages and visits to

cities around the world have become almost unthinkable for many travellers without a well-thumbed copy of the relevant Eyewitness Guide. The series, which now runs to 56 titles, has sold 18 million copies in 39 languages.

In 1987, Dorling moved into children's books and for 10 years has made learning a pleasure for thousands of absorbed children and their relieved (if considerably poorer) parents. From *The Ultimate Dinosaur Sucker Book* to *PB Bear's Birthday Party*, DK has effectively cornered a hugely lucrative market.

But the real excitement, according to Mr Kindersley, lies in what he describes as "the

digital future". For a man who has made a fortune out of the printed word he exudes enthusiasm for the interactive PC world in which his books' images spring to life. After three years of development, DK will this year launch its latest, *3D Children's Encyclopedia*, whose half a billion words, maps, pictures, video clips and music are expected to astonish any parent able to get near the family computer.

Alan Buckingham, who heads DK's multi-media operation, believes the CD-Rom market is set to explode in the next few years. In 1994, he says, there were around 12 million personal computers with CD-Rom dri-

ves, three-quarters of them in America. By 2000 there will be an estimated 97 million.

Peter Kindersley dismisses recent problems in America as a distraction from long-term trends that will ensure the DK phenomenon continues unchecked.

He said: "Who would have thought the Learning Channel would be the fastest-growing cable channel in the US, or that the Discovery Channel would be sold in 123 markets. Globally more and more people are rediscovering learning and that being a self-educator can bring great benefits."

Shares crash, page 20

'Crash' is passed for uncut release

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The highly controversial film, *Crash*, which depicts characters being sexually aroused by graphic car crashes, was yesterday passed for release uncut by the British Board of Film Classification.

The board's director James Ferman said the "unusual and disturbing film" was neither illegal nor harmful. One of the characters in the film is disabled from a car crash. But the BBFC said it had showed the film to a top lawyer, a forensic psychologist and an audience of disabled people before granting it an 18 certificate.

David Cronenberg's adaptation of the novel by JG Ballard was the subject of a newspaper campaign to have it banned after its screening at the London Film Festival last year. Westminster Council, in London, gave it an interim ban. Until that is lifted, the number of cinemas at which *Crash* can be shown in London may be affected.

The film, starring the Oscar winner Holly Hunter, demands a strong stomach. But its opponents ignored the fact that its deliberately sterile atmosphere and the stress on the unfulfilled nature of the characters' relationships acted against it glamorising its subject matter.

The psychologist consulted by the BBFC said there was no sexual deviancy in the film, and that a notorious scene with a woman in callipers was not fetishistic because she was seen as attractive in spite of her scars and limb supports, not because of them.

The BBFC said disabled people shown the film believed the depiction of the woman struggling in callipers mirrored the difficulties that many of them had to overcome.

Celebrities including Jeremy Irons, Nicolas Roeg, Michael Palin, Ken Loach and film producer Duncan Kenworthy had rallied to the film's defence. A spokesman for Columbia TriStar, the film's UK distributor, said: "We are thrilled the BBFC have finally given *Crash* the certificate it has always deserved."

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£10m a year wasted on unneeded Caesarians

Annabel Ferriman

Women are being subjected to unnecessary tests and Caesarean sections, wasting £10m annually and increasing ill-health, a new report from the Audit Commission says today.

The nationwide study, of 2,400 mothers reported wide geographical discrepancies in Caesarean rates which, the commission said, indicated that some doctors were too quick to rely on this method.

Women who had interventions during childbirth, including forceps deliveries and Caesareans, described "reduced levels of satisfaction and confidence", felt "less well supported" and suffered increased postnatal ill health, "according to the report."

"There is a general consensus that levels of Caesarean section are higher than are clinically required... Caesarean sections at trusts visited ranged from 11 per cent to 18 per cent of deliveries and vary more than twofold nationally (the average being 17 per cent)," the report said.

Obstetricians perform Caesarean sections for a variety of reasons, including abnormal fetal presentation, fetal distress and poor progress during labour.

The report said: "These interventions have important consequences, with women taking longer to recover and staying longer in hospital, making them more costly. A Caesarean section can cost in excess of £700."

The Audit Commission collected information from 13 NHS trusts, 12 commissioning authorities and 300 GPs, as well as from women who had given birth in June and July 1995.

Each year the NHS spends more than £1.1bn on maternity services for about 650,000 women, at a cost of about £1,700 per delivery. The commission found that many trusts

provided more antenatal check-ups than were needed for low-risk women and some relied too much on specialist involvement.

This was more expensive and less popular than local community services provided by midwives and GPs, and tied up resources worth £10m annually, which could be better spent on providing better information to women, said the report.

Although health authorities and trusts have been encouraged to take a more woman-centred approach, since the publication of *Changing Childbirth* by the government-appointed Expert Maternity Group in 1993, the commission says that they could do more.

In many ways, the report is an indictment of the hospital services, showing that less than half of pregnant women felt that hospital staff gave them confidence and less than two in five felt that someone got to know them. One in four women reported being left alone in labour, at a time that worried them.

Ms Beverley Fitzsimons, project manager at the commission, said: "Health authorities have got to use a variety of means to find out what women want, including consulting local maternity services liaison committees. We found the general growth in Caesarean sections worrying, and the variation between trusts worrying. We do not believe that there is such a thing as 'a correct rate', but a rate which is right for the particular case-mix. We would recommend that each trust reviews its Caesarean rate to see whether it is justified."

Postnatal hospital care came in for the most critical comment, with women complaining about "poor food and hygiene, cramped bathrooms and inadequate eating areas." They also felt that different professionals gave them conflicting advice on breast feeding.



Tiny tartan: Young members of the Wallace clan rehearsing for today's 'Braveheart Walk' at Stirling Castle

Photograph: Colin McPherson

Masons told to reveal themselves

Christian Wolmar

Westminster Correspondent

The days of freemasonry as a secret organisation may be numbered. Freemasons in the police force and the judiciary should be forced to disclose their membership of the organisation, an all-party group of MPs will recommend in a report to be published next week.

The recommendation will send shock waves through the 7,823 lodges and 349,213 masons around the country for whom secrecy has always been sacred. Membership of lodges may decline if men joining them are no longer able to keep their membership secret. However, the committee is unlikely to make recommendations on how registers should be kept and whether they should be open to everyone or only to relevant parties.

A new Labour government is likely to seize on the recommendation, especially as Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, suggested in his evidence that there should be a register for defence and prosecution lawyers in court cases.

The Home Affairs Committee, which has spent the past six months examining masonry in the police and judiciary, has been inundated with over 200 submissions and its members have been influenced by the fact that so many have recommended that masons in public

life should declare themselves.

Several bodies involved in the administration of the law and the judiciary have submitted evidence recommending more openness about freemasonry. For example, the Law Society, which represents solicitors, said there were a number of options, including some form of registration system by the Lord Chancellor's Office for judges and chief justices for police.

The Association of Chief Police Officers also said it was prepared to support a register, although it did not specify how it should be done. Among police groups, only the Police Federation, which represents lower ranks, is completely opposed.

MPs on the committee have been surprised that freemasonry is not as prevalent among the judiciary and the police as expected. Of the 130 senior judges, only a handful are masons according to evidence given to the committee. This is seen as a decline in the prevalence of masonry since it first started attracting major media attention in the mid 1980s.

Among a sample of local magistrates for which evidence was obtained, between a sixth and a third were masons in one area, while freemasonry was less common in other areas.

Supporters of disclosure point out that freemasonry only became very secretive after the Second World War and until

then members did not necessarily hide the fact that they belonged to a lodge.

The members of the Home Affairs committee have not been divided solely on party lines with some Tory MPs supporting a disclosure of membership by freemasons, while some Labour MPs have expressed opposition. The inquiry into freemasonry was first suggested by a Labour member of the committee, Chris Mullin, who was disturbed at the number of freemasons who appeared to be involved in the Birmingham Six case. However, it took two years for the enquiry by MPs to start after they had agreed to instigate it in July 1994.

Evans is sued on terrorist remark

Ian Burrell

The Birmingham Six yesterday served a libel writ on Tory MP David Evans over remarks allegedly made during an interview with sixth-formers.

Supporters of the Birmingham Six said the comments, which apparently questioned the men's innocence of the 1974 pub bombings, were deeply hurtful and came as their final compensation claims were still being settled.

The writ was served on Mr Evans's solicitors by agents of the men's lawyers, London-based BM Birnberg & Co.

Benedict Birnberg said the action was prompted by remarks allegedly made by Mr Evans when he addressed schoolchildren in Welwyn Garden City last month.

Mr Birnberg said he wrote to Mr Evans about the comments in early March but, when no reply was received, a writ was issued last Friday and served yesterday. "We are seeking damages and an injunction preventing him from saying these things again," he said.

Michael Collins from the British and Irish Human Rights Centre, which campaigns for the men, said: "Mr Evans's remarks were ill-judged and irresponsible, particularly coming from a Member of Parliament."

"The Birmingham Six case was settled, and they proved their innocence. Any attempt to impugn their integrity must be fought. They are quite right to take legal action to protect their reputation. These sort of remarks are deeply hurtful."

The men's lawyers were seeking a judicial review in a bid to finalise compensation claims, he said. "Their compensation has still not been settled, although substantial interim payments have been made."

"Their marriages have broken down, their children grew up, and their worth was taken away while they were in prison. They have found it virtually impossible to get work, and yet no settlement has been made."

Mr Evans's talk with sixth-formers at Stanborough School caused a storm of protest when details of what he had said reached the media.

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Mad cow legacy will last into next century

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

One year on from government's BSE announcement, nobody knows how many will die

The legacy of mad cow disease will last far longer than the disease itself. While the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is falling rapidly, the political, medical and economic and legal ramifications will follow us into the next century.

It is a year tomorrow that Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, said the Government recognised a link between exposure to the agent that causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cows

and a variant of the fatal brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans.

At that time, there were 10 confirmed cases of v-CJD, as doctors now refer to it. It was unknown before 1994.

Now there are 17 definite and probable cases, according to the support network set up by victims' families. The possibility remains that thousands will eventually die of it, according to Professor John Pattison, the scientist who chairs of Seac, the Government's advisory com-

mittee on BSE and CJD.

The problem is that nobody knows how many people have been exposed to how much of the infective agent, nor how long it takes to incubate before causing clinical symptoms.

Estimates vary from 15 years upwards. Precautions taken since last March have reduced the risk that BSE-infected products could enter the human food supply but scientists still argue about how infective meat or other tissues could be.

The certainty is that the num-

ber of cows with the disease is falling off. Last year, there were only 7,709 confirmed cases in the UK, less than 0.1 per cent of the national herd, and this year there have been 177, so far. At the peak in 1992, there were almost 37,000 confirmed cases. In total, more than 166,000 BSE-infected cattle have been slaughtered.

But the economic effect lingers. Britain's £500m beef export market is still moribund, as it has been since 27 March last year, when the European Com-

mission banned exports. Fearful of the effect of BSE on world markets.

John Major's "beef war" of non-cooperation with the EC last summer was short-lived. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) now says it has complied with the EC's requirements for the lifting of the ban, introducing a cull of cattle and new inspection and certification of herds and meat.

But does not know when the Commission ban will be lifted. The EC shows no signs of

burying. Several countries on the Continent are facing their own BSE fears, with suggestions that France and Germany have covered up cases. The deaths of two people in France and one in Germany of suspected v-CJD has added to these worries.

But even when the ban is lifted, Britain's herds have been decimated, and exporters will have to break into markets that have been taken over by rivals. At home, the political effect has been immense. Mr Major lost face over his about-turn.

Douglas Hogg, Secretary of State for Agriculture, has been pummeled over his department's failure to stamp out BSE. The issue has widened Tory divisions on Europe.

More importantly, the fallout from BSE has enraged farmers and will cost the Tories important votes in constituencies they once relied on. Some farmers are prepared to break the habit of a lifetime and not vote Conservative in the coming election, especially in the West Country. The permanent losers are the

families and relatives of those who have had, or will have, v-CJD. It affects young people and is always fatal.

The prospects for treatment are minimal. Scientists are still unsure whether the disease is caused by a misshapen protein, the "prion" hypothesis, or a related effect which causes the protein to accumulate in insoluble plaques in the brain.

Professor John Collinge, who last year demonstrated that the molecular "signature" of the plaques of BSE and v-CJD is almost identical, believes a therapy is at least 10 years away.

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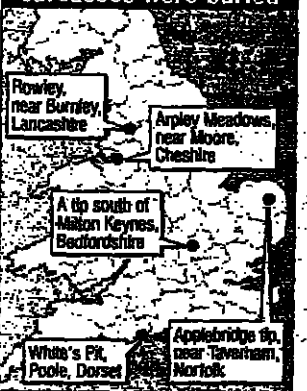
Concern over infected cow burial sites

Charles Arthur

Investigations by *The Independent* have found a number of sites around England where BSE-infected carcasses with the heads removed were legally buried before 1991, when government advice was changed to insist that cows with BSE must be incinerated except in unusual circumstances.

The sites identified are in a variety of counties, including Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Dorset,

Where the BSE-infected carcasses were buried



Lancashire and Norfolk. It is not known, though, how many of the 6,117 BSE-infected cattle that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) said have been buried in landfills since 1986 are located at the sites. MAFF staff are now urgently compiling a centralised list. The sites identified by *The Independent* are:

■ A tip operated by Shanks McEwan south of Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire. Rail freight workers recall a delivery of infected cattle before 1990.

A company spokesman was unable to verify the details, but said: "We would have disposed of animal waste in the manner demanded by legislation."

■ Arpley Meadows, near Moore, Cheshire. In 1990, it was taking delivery of at least four carcasses per week.

■ White's Pit, Poole, Dorset. An unknown number were deposited there in 1988 and 1989.

The action was defended subsequently by the MAFF divisional veterinary officer for the area, who said "There is no evidence of BSE in bones."

■ Rowley, near Burnley, Lancashire. Up to 20 a week may have been buried on the tip for up to 18 months.

■ Attlebridge tip, near Taverham, Norfolk. Between 1989 and 1992, 350 BSE-infected cattle were buried there. The site is 800 metres from the river Wensum, and a farmer living near the site has been told that water from a nearby borehole would not be of suitable quality.

The urgency with which MAFF's Animal Health offices at Rothwell, near London, are compiling the complete list of sites of buried carcasses is also at variance with the ministry's insistence that they pose no risk to water or ground supplies.

A spokesman pointed out that Seac, the Government's advisory committee on BSE and related diseases, concluded last May that the buried animals "would be unlikely to cause any problems" and "didn't recommend that we uncover the past."

However, farmers are not allowed to bury sheep which die of scrapie - the sheep equivalent of BSE, and the disease which MAFF says was the origin

of BSE - because experience has shown that the infective agent remains in the land.

A Seac member told *The Independent* last week that "we would have to do a risk assessment" to be entirely sure what possible threat might remain after so long.

But, he added, "We were eating the stuff in our food at the time."

"The risk that those sites pose is infinitesimal compared to the risk from eating products containing bovine offals before they were banned from food in November 1989."

Agonising decline that led to first diagnosis of new illness

Stephen Churchill's parents realise now that the car crash was the first sign, writes Charles Arthur.

"It was about August. He was simply driving near home in his mum's Ford Fiesta and he went across the white line, head-on to an oncoming army truck," said Dave Churchill, Stephen's

father. The car was a write-off. Stephen couldn't explain what had happened. Nor could his passenger. Both were lucky to survive - "long legs, and a seat a long way back," said Mr Churchill yesterday.

But for that, the first Briton to die of the "new variant" of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

might have been just another road statistic.

Mr Churchill feels now that the disease's name (v-CJD) is confusing: "It would be better to call it something else, like 'florid plaque disease' - which is what you see in the brain sections - to distinguish it from the normal form," he said.

The "sporadic" form of CJD usually affects people over 60, and has no known cause. By contrast, v-CJD has so far affected people under 50, and is almost certainly caused by eating BSE-infected food.

But the Churchills had no inkling of that. Instead, they endured months in which the 18-year-old slipped into an incurable, remote depression and gave up school. In November, his mother took him out shopping, and stopped at a cafeteria. They ate a small meal and went back out to the car. "Did you enjoy that?" she asked. Stephen didn't remember it.

Doctors insisted it was simply depression. Stephen was given medication. By December he was losing his co-ordination and could not sign his name. He spent that Christmas with them - "the most miserable we've ever had," recalled Mr Churchill.

It was so bad that on 3 January 1995 they demanded another consultation with the psychiatrist. Stephen was admitted to hospital. The doctors seemed reluctant to diagnose CJD in an 18-year-old - it would make medical history - but on 13 February they did. Mr Churchill recalls his frustration. A diagnosis "would not have helped Stephen, but it would have taken away the doubt, which is what breeds fear."

Early in May, Stephen was released into a care home, where his family recreated his own bedroom - "his Pamela Anderson posters, his beer bottle collection, all those things". They were prepared for his in-

evitable death to take years; instead he died two weeks later, on 21 May - the first, and youngest, Briton to die of v-CJD.

When Stephen Dorrell made his fateful announcement last March, "it gave me a focus for my anger," said Mr Churchill. "It's as if Stephen had been killed by a hit-and-run driver, and then 10 months later the police come and say 'By the way, we've arrested so-and-so who



Stephen Churchill: Diagnosis made medical history

lives down the road." Since then, the Churchills have applied pressure for a judicial review. They have never directly blamed beef for their son's death: preferring to let the scientists do that. "We just ask questions," said Mr Churchill. After Stephen died, the Churchills became closely involved with the national CJD Support Group. Mr Churchill's advice to anybody whose child or relative dies of v-CJD is: "We would encourage anybody to go to the media after their loss. Publicity is a weapon, he believes, which will eventually cut to the answer: whose fault was it that these people died?"

The National CJD Helpline is on 01380 720033.

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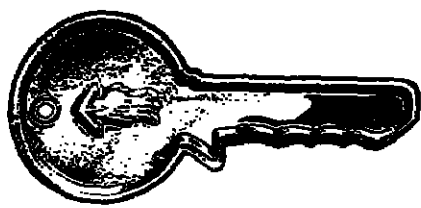
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news

Penguin wins its suit as Puffin gets the crumbs in battle of the biscuits

Ian Burrell

Asda, the supermarket chain, may have to p-p-pick up a bill for damages after the judge in the great chocolate biscuit case ruled that its Puffin brand was a copy of the famous Penguin.

Mr Justice Robert Walker found Asda guilty of passing-off, but allowed the supermarket to continue making its biscuits provided it amended the packaging. United Biscuits had sued Asda on the grounds that the supermarket's product was a copy of its 60-year-old brand.

The seven-day hearing at the High Court in London was supposed to end the confusion of the shopper but ended up baffling the biscuit-makers, both of which claimed a victory. Asda said it would continue to sell Puffins after "reworking" the packaging, although it admitted that it was unsure what changes the judge had in mind.

Mr Justice Walker's 35-page judgment included his "judicial notice of relevant ornithology". After noting the differences between the two birds'

Latin names, plumage and nesting places, he admitted: "My own knowledge has been supplemented considerably from a handbook which counsel showed me."

In a judgment punctuated by pictures of Puffins and Penguins, the judge referred to various images used by UB over the years, including Penguins in rubber boots, chef's hat and ice skates and scarf. Recently UB had gone

back to using more naturalistic penguins - "not encumbered by boots, skates or other paraphernalia".

The judge said that had the Asda product been called "Bison" with an appropriate cartoon, the case would never have been brought. "The word Puffin is not very different in form from Penguin," he observed, and concluded: "The Puffin packaging and get up was, in the material sense, deceptively

similar to those of the Penguin." He ordered an inquiry into the amount of damages suffered by UB as a result of the Asda product.

UB's sales of McVities Penguins amount to £30m a year with more than £4m spent annually on advertising. Asda's expenditure on developing and launching its rival last September was also substantial. The Puffin - 25 per cent cheaper than the Penguin - was

introduced at its 200-plus stores as a "brand beater".

The judge cleared Asda of infringing UB's registered trade marks - the name and pictures of the bird - except for two incidents when the supermarket went so far as to use the phrase "Pick up a Puffin" in its advertising. He granted a 35-day stay of execution to hundreds of thousands of Puffins awaiting sale in the old packaging.



Ruffled feathers: Asda staff demonstrating the difference in plumage outside the High Court yesterday

Photograph: Stefan Rousseau

Scrap BBC governors, say MPs

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

A committee of MPs has condemned the BBC Board of Governors as a bunch of part-time amateurs threatening the future of the Corporation.

Parliament's National Heritage Select Committee, which yesterday released its long-awaited report, *The BBC and The Future Of Broadcasting*, says the corporation cannot expect to survive in the coming age of new digital channels and interactive TV if it continues to be managed by part-timers with

no knowledge of broadcasting.

Instead, the committee, which is chaired by Gerald Kaufman, wants to see a hands-on executive chairman appointed by the Secretary of State for National Heritage who is backed up by a professional board of governors.

At present, the BBC's Board of Governors is comprised of the great and the good, such as former trade union leader Bill Jordan, Lord Lennox, a former ambassador to Spain and Margaret Spurr, a former head-teacher.

"The present governors were

no doubt an extremely worthy collection of people. Mr Kaufman told BBC Radio 4's *The World At One*.

"But in this cut-throat world of huge expansions in broadcasting, it is simply inappropriate for the BBC to go on being run by a part-time group of the great and the good."

The BBC said its governors were custodians of the licence payer's interest and not a *Pic* so no change was needed.

As well as professional directors, the report recommends that the Board of Governors should lose its right to regulate

the BBC on taste and decency matters. It wants an external regulator like the Independent Television Commission which oversees Channel 4 and ITV.

But the committee does not believe now is the time to move to a single regulator, covering the BBC and the commercial sector. It wants a simpler body in ultimate control of the corporation.

The report also recommends that the BBC should be able to borrow without the debt adding to the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and thereby contributing to the Government's

debt. "We believe it should be run as a business. But we want the public service nature of its activities to be safeguarded, and that is why we recommend the external regulator" said Mr Kaufman.

The report casts doubt on the long-term future of digital terrestrial broadcasting. In January, ITV broadcasters Carlton Communications and Granada linked up with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB and the BBC to apply for three digital frequencies that could start broadcasting 30 channels into British homes from next year.

The report concludes that the digital system has will only last for a short period because of its inability to supply truly interactive TV services such as video-on-demand.

The committee also said the funding formula by which Channel 4 pays the ITV companies millions of pounds every year should be ended as soon as possible. But the MPs dismissed calls for Channel 4 to be privatised. "We are at a loss to understand why there is any consideration whatever of privatising Channel 4," the MPs said.

Union chief seeks special schools for unruly pupils

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

More than 100,000 pupils in mainstream schools are so disruptive they should be removed and taught in special schools, the leader of the second largest teaching union said yesterday.

The call for a return towards segregated education, made by Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, flies in the face of almost 20 years of efforts to integrate children with special needs into ordinary schools.

The number of children with behavioural problems now staying in ordinary schools was the biggest single factor behind the dramatic rise in permanent exclusions from 2,500 to over 11,000 annually in the last four

years, Mr de Gruchy said. A report blaming integration for much of the increase in classroom disruption will be presented to the union's Easter conference.

The NASUWT's call for greater segregation in order to ease discipline problems comes as part of a package of demands directed at the Government taking power after the election.

The union will also ask a new administration to work with it to cut workloads by reducing bureaucracy imposed on teachers as a result of school inspection and pupil assessment. If nothing is done within a year, it will ballot members over a boycott of such tasks.

The NASUWT will also renew its calls for substantial salary rises for teachers who opt to stay in the classroom rather

than seeking promotion and cutting back on teaching, offering in return to accept tough appraisals which could allow heads to get rid of poor teachers more easily. The present top salary for classroom teachers of £21,000 should be raised to £30,000, the union said.

Mr de Gruchy also challenged Mary Warnock, whose seminal 1978 report calling for children with special educational needs to be taught with their peers wherever possible formed the basis of the 1981 Education Act. Baroness Warnock should practise what she had preached, Mr de Gruchy said.

"If it is so important to care for these youngsters why doesn't she give up her job in the House of Lords and go and teach these youngsters and show how it should be done?"

Hospital's 'poor' cardiac surgery prompts inquiry

Annabel Ferriman

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, announced an inquiry yesterday into cardiac surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary after the publication of a report showing that one of the hospital's consultants had a "poor" surgical record.

An independent expert review which considered the treatment of 2,500 patients operated on during 1993-1995 condemned the record of James Wisheart as "significantly poorer" than that of his colleagues.

Mr Wisheart retired early as medical director of the hospital in December, when he also stopped doing clinical work. On Monday, the 59-year-old surgeon announced his retirement from the NHS. He and fellow surgeon Janardan

Dhasmana already face a separate General Medical Council investigation following an inquiry into the paediatric cardiac surgery at the hospital.

Last year it was revealed that nine out of 13 babies died when undergoing "switch" operations and other surgical techniques to repair heart defects at the hospital between 1990 and 1995. The failure rate was around two out of three, compared with a national average of one in 10.

A GMC spokesman said: "Our investigations into complaints about paediatric cardiac surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary are well advanced."

Mr Dorrell revealed, in answer to a question from Robert Key, MP for Salisbury, that the Department of Health inquiry would not start until the GMC investigation was over.

"I am mainly concerned about the response made at that time by the trust's management to these matters," he said.

"In the past two years, the trust has taken steps to improve the services, appointing a new paediatric cardiac surgeon and transferring services to new specialist facilities at the Bristol Children's Hospital."

"However questions remain about the handling of these difficult issues," he said. "It is vital the facts are ascertained that any failures are identified and that lessons are learnt in Bristol and throughout the country to prevent similar situations in future."

The original inquiry into the deaths was carried out by Marc de Leval, consultant paediatric surgeon at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

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Springtime for Hockney as he paints the town with flowers



David Lister
Arts News Editor

For the art world, 1 May will have a significance beyond the general election. David Hockney is to give his first major British show of paintings for nearly a decade.

The exhibition "Flowers, Faces and Spaces", until 19 July at the Annely Juda Gallery in central London, will include a brand new series of more than 30 portraits and self-portraits and 18 still lifes never exhibited before. It will be his largest commercial gallery show. A number of the works will be for sale and are expected to fetch between £150,000 and £400,000, and it is likely to be one of the best-attended exhibitions of the year.

Annely Juda, who has been a friend of Hockney's since the Sixties, said yesterday that the flower still lifes were "a real departure for David".

Hockney, who lives in Los Angeles, says the new paintings of irises, sunflowers and violets bathed in Californian sunlight were greatly inspired by a visit he made to the Vermeer exhibition in The Hague last year.

"What struck me was how vivid and strong the colour was in paintings that are 300 years old," he said. "I came back here and realised we've got a marvellous abundance of wonderful, strong light. I began to arrange daylighting in different ways ... I've painted flowers throughout my career, but I've never really done a whole series."

A 160-page catalogue documenting all the new paintings will accompany the exhibition.



Hockney: Inspired by Vermeer

Thatcher to join Churchill in archive

Baroness Thatcher's political and personal papers are to go on permanent loan to a Cambridge college. The former Tory prime minister said she was "delighted" that the records of her life and work would stay in Britain, and join those of an earlier premier, Winston Churchill.

Lady Thatcher announced yesterday that she would donate her papers to a new charity, the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust, which would lend them permanently - "subject to certain conditions of care" - to Churchill College, Cambridge.

The keeper of the college's archives centre, Dr Piers Brendon, said the papers were "without doubt the most important archive of our times, following that of Sir Winston himself". The collection, which includes photographs, and audiovisual material, comprises more than 1,000 boxes of Lady Thatcher's political and personal papers from 1945 onwards. Most relate to her years as leader of the opposition and prime minister.

A spokesman for Lady

Thatcher's office said the work on setting up the charity was almost complete, "but final arrangements were still being made for moving the archive."

Lady Thatcher said she hoped the papers would "be a valuable source for students and scholars who wish to study the great changes brought about by the Conservative governments that I had the privilege to lead".

The spokesman said papers related to her work as prime minister would be bound by the 30-year rule for government papers, so those from her first months in power in 1979 would not be available until 2010.

Churchill College, founded by Sir Winston 37 years ago, has 400 other collections of papers, including those of former Labour prime minister Clement Attlee and former leader Neil Kinnock, and senior Tories Lord Hailsham and Selwyn Lloyd. The master of the college, Sir John Boyd, said: "Lady Thatcher's initiative is a generous one: we welcome it and will take good care of these papers."

DAILY POEM

Spring

By Peter Dale

Yes, yes, we watched so many things die:
lamented the fresh green of the willow
and sundry roses under this or that sky -
and much else mourned into a pillow.

We knew full well it came to this.
So I offer you this nostalgia of grief,
and these sprigs of forsythia, not much amiss,
that blossom before they come to leaf.

"Spring", originally published in Peter Dale's collection *Too Much of Water*, appears in his recent volume of new and selected poems, *Edge to Edge* (Anvil Press, £9.95). Anvil also publishes his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

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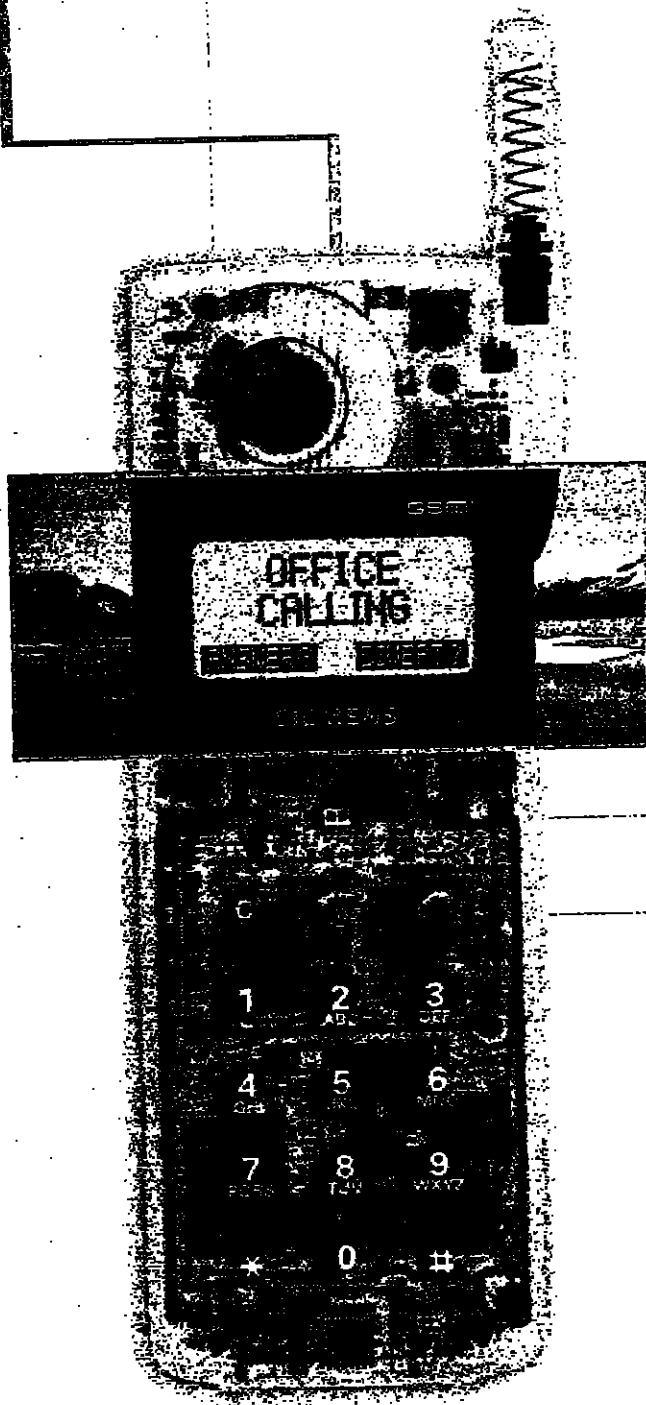
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election countdown

Campaign trail: Blair opts for low-key approach and shuns the big set pieces as Ashdown seeks to woo the women's vote

PM the challenger as leaders swap roles

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major is approaching the campaign trail like the challenger against the prime ministerial Tony Blair. His opening trip to Luton on Monday showed that he is at home roughing it on the street.

One seasoned television presenter said: "Alastair Campbell has told Tony not to make eye contact with us. He stares straight ahead and sails past. He's been told it's not prime ministerial to do door-steps (off-the-cuff interviews) Major does them all the time."

Mr Major knows he has to cause a stir. Mr Blair knows he has to avoid it. If he is to come from behind, a trip yesterday to the workshops of McLaren, the Formula One racing team, showed Mr Major that the place he should be cutting up rough is Tory headquarters in Smith Square.

The visit started promisingly enough. The theme this week is "British excellence", journalists were told on the break. But the McLaren plant in Woking, Surrey, Mr Major would see the British-built McLaren car which won the Australian Grand Prix at the weekend with its British driver, David Coulthard. The trip was arranged at 48-hours' notice

with Ron Dennis, managing director of McLaren, a personal donor to Tory party funds, to show that the underdog can win. A winning racing car, fired up, and raring to go with its British driver at the wheel, would have been irresistible to the lunchtime television news.

In the event, the coffin-sized car had been put up on two steel trestles in a high-tech maintenance bay. It had been stripped of its wheels, and there were red stickers saying "Sun" on the wing mirrors. The man from the Sun (backs Blair) was well-pleased.

McLaren may be world-beaters, but as a photo-opportunity, the racing car without wheels was a dead duck, shot to pieces with metaphors. "The wheels have dropped off the wagon," said the man from the Sun.

As he left McLaren, Mr Major faced the cameras for a "door step", brushing aside the Sun's endorsement for Tony Blair, and insisting like McLaren, that he will come from behind to win.

His words were nearly drowned out by a train on a line a few hundred yards away. It was operated by South West Trains, the company which has given the Government's privatisation programme a bad name by slashing services. He will be back on the cam-



Blazing a trail: John Major and his wife, Norma (right), viewing an £800,000 McLaren GT car at the Formula One team's plant at Woking yesterday. Photograph: Brian Harris

paign trail today, visiting a school in the Midlands with assisted places to highlight Tory education policies. There will be more visits to factories run by Tory-supporting businesses, to challenge Mr Blair's ability to woo the business vote. And

there will be set-piece rallies with Jeffrey Archer, the novelist, acting as the minder and warm-up act. Security surrounding a Tory election rally at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 4 April has been put on full alert for a possible IRA

attack after the date and location was published. The security risks surrounding Mr Major's tour were highlighted by the near riot in Luton on Monday, where he opened the campaign with a speech from his soap box. The Major Battle Bus will be

stopping more often than it did in 1992 for street meetings in this campaign. The tour, accompanied by Lord Archer, Howell James, his policy adviser, and Sheila Gunn, his press officer, will take in the West Country, where the Lib-

eral Democrats are strong, and the Midlands, where Mr Major has been wooing the Asian vote. Basilidon in Essex is on the list, as the scene of the turning point for the Tories on election night in 1992.

The key battleground will be the Tory marginals, but this time, his strategists are taking the battle bus to Labour's heartlands, including Merseyside, to take the attack to Labour-controlled councils. It will be a gruelling six-week campaign, and it risks turning off the voters.

Labour plans party trick to present two Tony Blairs

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour has a trick up its sleeve to keep the electorate keen over the next six weeks – not one Tony Blair, but two.

The first Mr Blair to appear at each election event will be a smiling, almost presidential figure who will be surrounded by cheering crowds wearing red rosettes and carrying swathes of red balloons.

But the glitzy, glamorous and even exciting man who is supposed to be created by these scenes will soon be replaced by a more serious character. The second Mr Blair will be found holding in-depth discussions with voters, giving keynote speeches to serious audiences and arguing the toss on policy issues with the unconvinced.

"Euthuse and convince" will be the key to the party's campaign, Mr Blair must be portrayed as a vibrant politician

whose presence sparks wild enthusiasm in every crowd, officials say, but he must not appear lightweight. Every shower of red roses must be backed up by a serious show of political weight.

Mr Blair's first election trip, to Gloucester on Monday, was a perfect example of the genre. Step one: as the party leader descends from his train, accompanied by his wife, Cherie, he is greeted by an enthusiastic demonstration and his aides have to clear a path from the platform to his car. Step two: Cherie sits in the back row as Mr Blair, accompanied by the local candidate, takes questions on everything from Europe to prescription charges.

Every scene will be carefully controlled by the party's spin doctors, and many will appear far more spontaneous than they really are. There will be more focus groups of the type seen in Gloucester, and there will also be town-centre walkabouts of

the sort John Major attempted in Luton. His wife will be accompanying him to many of the events, but will not be omnipresent during the campaign.

As for the big, set-piece rallies and speeches, these will certainly happen, but will be minutely planned in order to prevent a repetition of the triumphal Sheffield rally which was credited by some with losing Labour the last election.

There will be a big-city rally during the last week or so, and possibly another earlier in the campaign, though party spin doctors are not saying yet where or when they will be. We can confidently expect, though, that they will have a somewhat more serious, statesmanlike air than some past events. There will be rabble-rousing speeches to the party faithful, of course, but these will be interspersed with heavyweights, set piece addresses to "serious" audiences of business people and the like.

While Mr Blair is busy with all this, the key figures in his campaign will be travelling the country, concentrating their efforts on about 100 target seats. This part of the election effort will be spearheaded by Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott, who has just embarked on a 10,000-mile round Britain tour. It will be backed up by every other member of Labour's frontbench team.

Leading women MPs will play a key part in the party's strategy, meeting focus groups of floating female voters in marginal seats and also visiting businesses where many of the staff are women.

Each party regional office has a detailed plan of which politicians will appear in which marginal seats on which days. But with a six-week campaign stretching resources there are many officials who may be wishing they had three, four or even five Tony Blairs.

Barrie Clement

Paddy Ashdown has been persuaded that he has a lot more to offer female voters than either the Conservative or the Labour leader.

As part of a "women-friendly" campaign, the Liberal Democrat leader will attempt to listen rather than hector, suggest rather than assert and tell the truth rather than dissemble, his aides argue. Where John Major and Tony Blair will don the mantle of gravitas, Mr Ashdown will try for statesmanlike humility with the odd giggle thrown in.

He believes that the cock-fighting tactics of the other party leaders are a turn-off to voters in general, and to women in particular.

To reinforce the pitch for female votes, he will be enlisting high-profile help from Baroness Williams of Crosby (former Labour minister Shirley

Williams), Emma Nicholson, former Tory and now Liberal Democrat MP for Devon West and Torridge and Diana Maddock, MP for Christchurch.

The Liberal Democrats might or might not believe it an advantage that the 56-year-old Mr Ashdown is due to become a grandfather for the first time during the hustings.

When the wheels of the Liberal Democrats' "battle bus" finally start turning on 7 April – it will no doubt become known as the Paddy Wagon – Mr Ashdown will want to be seen as a listener rather than a speaker.

His campaign managers boast that he will meet far more voters than the other party leader. The Liberal Democrat high command is determined to avoid television footage of Mr Ashdown charging through shopping precincts preceded by spin doctors, scattering voters and leaflets in his wake.

His senior lieutenants also insist that the party will avoid "negative campaigning", although a press conference at their headquarters yesterday failed to resist the temptation.

"Labour is not offering a change, it is offering an echo," was one of the themes. In the words of Lord Holme, party campaign manager, Mr Major and Mr Blair are engaged in an exhibition of "synchronised swimming".

The campaign's clarion call – which will adorn the manifesto, leaflets and all other material – will be the injunction: "Make the Difference". This may be regarded as a slightly negative way of being positive.

Senior officials at the party's Cowley Street headquarters in Westminster calculate that Labour's inexorable march to the right has left a yawning gap into which they can pour their limited resources.

Strategists are targeting the constituencies, particularly in the West Country where the Liberal Democrats have come a close second to the Tories.

Honesty will be the buzz word on the campaign trail. Honesty about increased taxes – the only credible way of improving education, the party argues. And honesty about Europe – the only party to be unashamedly Eurosceptic.

To those who contend that the proprietorship of a wheel staff may only be a distant ambition for the party, Mr Ashdown will point to the £15bn of public money for which they are responsible as the second largest party at local authority level. The general election coincides with voting in local elections.

And to those who dare suggest that the Liberal Democrats are basically Paddy Ashdown's party, they argue that he is more "team leader" than generalissimo.

MPs offer a case for windfall tax

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

An all-party Commons select committee yesterday provided valuable ammunition to Labour's plans for a windfall tax on the privatised utilities, with a report unanimously concluding that regulation had been too lenient in the years after the state sell-off.

However the rest of the report provided little support for the key Labour utilities policies. It conspicuously failed to back Labour's plans to change the system of price controls which cap bills each year by a formula based on the retail price index. Labour wants to

supplement this with an additional annual lever to cream off any excess profits, but the committee's Labour chairman, Martin O'Neill, argued this would be too complicated. "We're not sure that is going to work," he said. The current regime, was "as good as we're going to get at the moment".

Committee members were also notably lukewarm on Labour's policy to back up individual regulators with boards of advisory directors, preferring to delay structural reforms until the completion of domestic competition in gas and electricity later next year.

Successive opinion polls have demonstrated that the Gov-

ernment has been hard pressed to get across the benefits of privatisation, while utility executives pay themselves huge salaries. However, the issue has also proved complex for New Labour. Mr O'Neill yesterday admitted that privatisation had "benefited" consumers, a statement which would have been hugely controversial before the last election, though he insisted much of the improvement had come from a worldwide plunge in energy prices.

Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, immediately seized on the conclusions, which he claimed endorsed the case for the windfall tax. In a BBC interview, he added: "What the

report is about is whether the profits have been too high and the regulatory system too lax. And my whole case for the windfall tax is that the profits have been too high."

Though the tax itself was ostensibly beyond the committee's remit, Mr O'Neill told a news conference "there was evidence in the report to support the case for a windfall profits tax." He went on: "Profits were excessive and we all agree they were excessive."

John Butterfill, a Conservative committee member, swiftly disagreed, arguing that there would be "no point in having a regulator" if the tax went ahead. "The concept of a windfall

profits tax undermines the role of the regulator," he said. However, he also admitted that regulators had "underestimated the efficiency savings that could be achieved" from privatisation.

The Committee singled out the electricity sell-off for supplying up the biggest windfalls to investors, outweighing savings to customers. Figures showed shareholders in the 12 regional electricity companies, privatised in 1990 for £8bn, had earned total returns of about 40 per cent a year, well above the rise in the stock market as a whole. In contrast, prices for domestic electricity customers dropped by just 15 per cent after inflation.



Gordon Brown: Claims windfall tax is endorsed

significant shorts

Nationalists join fray with attack on Labour

The Scottish and Welsh nationalists got their election campaigns off the ground yesterday by launching an attack on Labour.

In the last joint news conference by Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party before the election, the two parties claimed they were the only ones to provide a radical alternative to the Tories. Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, said: "Blair has effectively cloned new Labour on a Tory model. In terms of economic and tax policy you could not put a cigarette paper between these two parties. So if they did have a [televised head-to-head] debate I can only imagine it would be on the colour of the tie ... or the cut of the suit."

Hunting lobby pledges £1m

One of the biggest-ever election lobbying campaigns in recent history is being conducted by the British Field Sports Society in the run up to 1 May.

Faced with the prospect of a massive Labour landslide, the group is prepared to spend up to £1m fighting an increasingly desperate battle to maintain the right to hunt in Britain. Labour has said it will give MPs a free vote on abolishing fox, deer and wildfowl hunting if it came to power.

Train managers escape quiz

Managers from South West Trains, the troubled train line whose timetable cuts caused public fury, escaped appearing before a Commons select committee yesterday after Conservative MPs voted to cancel the meeting.

The transport select committee, chaired by a former Conservative minister, Paul Channon, decided to drop the sensitive hearings after Tory MPs voted against continuing the investigation. SWT's poor performance as the first British Rail company to be sold off to the private sector, in this case to Stagecoach, has ensured that the issue will be buried by the government.

Brown puts British Gas and BT firmly in his sights

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Labour yesterday gave the clearest indication yet that British Telecom would be caught in its planned windfall tax on the privatised utilities.

Facing repeated questioning about which companies would be hit by the tax, Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, said it would affect "privatised companies that are licensed and regulated by statute." Experts said the definition was wider than any used so far by Labour, and would include BT, British Gas, the airports operator

BAA, Railtrack and British Energy – in addition to the electricity supply and water companies which have always expected to be included.

Mr Brown also categorically denied that the tax would be repeated in subsequent years. He told BBC radio: "This is a one-off. I have made that absolutely clear." Several utility companies have claimed the tax could be resurrected to raise funds for other Labour programmes.

Though he again declined to reveal how much money the tax would raise, Mr Brown reaffirmed that the levy would fund Labour's £3bn programme

to create jobs for the long-term unemployed. Mr Brown insisted the tax would work, adding: "we're utterly satisfied the three billion pound employment programme that we are proposing will be comfortably financed within the windfall levy." The party also announced it would appoint a minister for jobs working under the Secretary of State for Education.

Last night, one leading utility expert, Simon Flowers from the NatWest Bank's stockbroking arm, estimated that BT could have to pay at least £1bn to Treasury coffers after a post-election Labour budget, based on a £5bn

windfall tax. Mr Flowers said: "Increasingly since the turn of the year, the Labour Party has been suggesting the net would be spread fairly widely. That's why we've included British Gas and British Telecom in our calculations."

A BT spokesman yesterday brushed off the comments. "We have not been told that we have been included in this tax and we would be surprised if we were, given that our profits are not excessive and the regulation of BT is anything but lax," he said.

BAA, the group which runs Heathrow Airport, said it "welcomed"

the comments. "Gordon Brown stressed that the tax would only apply to the privatised utilities and BAA is not a utility. It simply wouldn't make any sense to include BAA," said a spokesman.

Some companies, including British Gas, BAA and BT, will argue their share prices have not substantially outperformed the general trend in the stockmarket in recent years. A wider tax might be privately supported by the electricity and water companies, which could see their share of the levy halved from £300m to £150m, based on a £5bn total.

election countdown

Tony was there, obviously. Gordon was there. David Blunkett was present. Even Margaret Beckett had been allowed on to the platform of Labour's first election press conference (though she didn't say anything). But where was John Prescott, Labour's folk hero?

All we had (among our bundle of press releases) was an ominous bit of paper telling us that Prezzy had - that morning - "set out on a 10,000 mile round Britain election tour - the biggest tour by an individual politician in election history".

Tongues wagged as we waited for the event to begin. Was Prescott - like Gerald Kaufman in 1992 - being shunted out of the limelight, deemed too dangerous to leave at large in the capital?

Worse, the release went on to state that "the first leg of the tour will finish in Inverness in late April". The first leg? Late April? But the election is on 1 May, so did this mean that Prezzy was to be kept in perpetual (but harmless) motion throughout the next Labour government, commencing visits to African and Central American capitals only when he had exhausted the constituencies of Britain? (Had interpreters all over the world been warned of the syntactical nightmare coming their way?)

But before the Prezzy lovers among us had time to protest, a button was pressed and a giant screen in the centre of the white hacienda wall opened up. We were transported to a scene out of *Songs of Praise*. Standing on a windy dock - the river Fal and the low hills of

DAVID Aaronovitch

Prezza is projected into perpetual motion

Cornwall behind them - was a group of middle-aged happy clappers, gathered round their thick-set and avuncular pastor.

Any minute, at his gentle command, they'd break into a rendition of "All Things Bright and Beautiful", which we

at home could hum over our press releases.

"Hello John," said Tony fondly, and the thickest vicar smiled cragily and responded, "Hello Tony". It was, of course, John Prescott, embarked upon his tour. Gathered around him, he had a

group of "ordinary" Falmouthians - whose common hobby just happened to be catapulting Labour into power as soon as possible. Prezzy was vicar no longer. But as he interviewed the locals live with an aplomb that would have done justice to an insert into the National Lottery programme or the Eurovision Song Contest, he became a genuine, scowly-smiley TV star: a cross between Anthea Turner and Les Dawson.

Like the moment when he introduced a man in a chef's costume, who was sporting a gigantic pasty on a huge silver platter. It was the chef, it was the Labour Party. Our hearts were in our mouths: was it not possible that a Tory dirty tricks Tarquin had got to the man in white coat, and bribed him to give Prezzy a pasty shampoo in front of the world's press?

But no. The happy clappers clapped happily, and Prezzy did a short chaotic homily on local unemployment. "In the 18 to 25 years", before introducing a man "no lives next door to Zeb Coo", but was nevertheless voting Labour.

Such folk - asked their opinion on camera - usually grunt into the hoods of their parkas. But not Seb's neighbour. With a practised turn to camera this chap reeled off a list of emotional reasons why he wanted Coo out and Labour in, involving his children, his grand-children, his collie Petra, and the starving of the world. And all without a script.

With that, Prezzy (now headed for Plymouth and Exeter) handed back to Tony in the London studio. "My thanks, John!" said the Leader. "Cheerio, Tony!" said Prezzy. It was a knockout.

Major's grammar scheme is ditched

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

John Major's plans to put a grammar school in every town have been ditched in order to allow the Government to push through its other legislation before the election.

Plans to allow new selective schools to be built and also to allow existing schools to select more pupils without special permission have been dropped. Clauses which would have enabled grant-maintained schools to expand at will have also been removed from the Bill.

Last night's announcement was made after detailed negotiations between the three main political parties on the future of all the Government's remaining legislation.

However, measures designed to improve school discipline and to give governing bodies new powers to exclude children were accepted by all sides.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats tried to stop measures which would expand the assisted-places scheme to primary schools.

However, ministers argued that about 150 pupils who expected to take up places under the scheme this September could be prevented from doing so if the clause was dropped, and it was finally agreed that it should stay in.

The agreement means that the rest of the Government's legislative programme will go through before Parliament breaks up for the Easter break on Friday.

As soon as MPs return on 8 April the house will be dissolved for the general election.

Some 28 Bills and at least nine pieces of backbench legislation are now expected to receive Royal Assent before the end of the week.

Debate is likely to continue late into the night in order to meet the deadline, but measures such as the Police Bill, which legalises the bugging of private property, and the Crime Bill, which imposes minimum sentences on persistent offenders, will be passed. The Crime Bill was passed by peers last night despite opposition from Tory law lords.

Peers were also due to complete debate on the Local Government and Rating Bill, which allows reduced rates for small village shops, and a backbench measure on police health and safety.

Today they are to pass the Finance Bill, enacting the 1996 Budget, the Education Bill, the Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill, the Building Societies Bill, four minor government Bills, and five backbench Bills.

MPs will today complete debate on the Police Bill and the Government's anti-harassment bill, among others.

Tory Lord Archer's Succession to the Crown Bill will not survive this Parliament.

Lord Archer has agreed to withdraw his Bill, which was to have had its second reading on Friday.

A Labour source said later that the party had agreed with government proposals for a sensible way forward on the Education Bill. "We make no apology for refusing to accept those elements of the Bill with which we disagree."

"There is a basic difference between the two parties on the definition of parental choice."

"We believe in parents choosing schools for their children. The Tories believe that schools should choose the parents."



Larger than life: John Prescott being beamed in from his 10,000-mile round-Britain tour to join Labour's first election press conference yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

Election timetable saves cash-for-questions MP

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Neil Hamilton, the MP at the centre of the cash-for-questions scandal, acted in a way that was inappropriate to his proper role as an MP, according to the report into the affair by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Sir Gordon Downey. The report was due to be completed by next Tuesday but now cannot be published because Parliament prorogues on Friday.

Sir Gordon's report was to have been presented to the all-party Standards and Privileges Committee next week but this is now not possible and he will hold on to his report to the new committee until after Parliament resumes.

Sir Gordon is thought to be angry that after working very hard for several months in order to meet the deadline of the election, publication is now being delayed.

The report, which is a wide investigation into the relationship between lobbyists and MPs, and into whether certain MPs accepted money to ask specific questions in the House, mentions around 30 MPs, but only five or six are the subject of severe criticism. While Mr Hamilton is said by Sir Gordon to have overstepped the mark most seriously, others whose behaviour is singled out include four other Tories: Sir Michael

Grylls, Michael Brown, Sir Andrew Bowden and Tim Smith.

The MPs have all been shown the extracts in the report which relate to them. All except Sir Michael will now be standing in the election with a cloud hanging over them and the prospect of facing a Labour-dominated Standards and Privileges Committee which is likely to take a harder line on them than the current Tory-dominated body.

Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey, suggested at Prime Minister's Question Time that John Major had deliberately prorogued Parliament early in order to ensure that the Downey report would not be published until after the election. Mr Major who last year said he wanted the matter cleared up as quickly as possible, replied: "I have no knowledge of when it [the report] will be presented."

Mr Hughes said later: "Parliament is not being dissolved until 8 April, which is 19 days after prorogation. Prorogation takes place on the same day, and in the three postwar elections when this did not take place, the biggest gap was 14 days."

"Mr Major has clearly done this on purpose to avoid the embarrassment of having this highly critical report published just before the election," the MP said.

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Tony Blair
5/10
John Major
6/10

Questions on health led to statistic swapping, as Blair must have known. Given this, he could have had more figures to throw at Major.

Major had had his fingers burned by Blair on health before. This time he was better briefed, concentrating on the Conservative pledge to increase investment, and peppering his replies with figures.

Blair's first statistic, "two thirds of health authorities and a third of hospital trusts are in deficit to the tune of £500m" was dismissed by Major as "blown out of all proportion". Only the Conservatives have pledged to increase funding, Major said, and it was about to rise by £1.6bn which would cover the deficit. Blair replied that it would not cover the deficit, and spoke of cancellation of non-emergency surgery, closure of Accident and Emergency departments, waiting lists and staff shortages, contrasting Major's "complacency" with "what people know is happening". He used a favourite health statistic of "20,000 new managers and 50,000 fewer nurses". Major replied with yet more statistics and a new slogan: "They may have set up the Health Service but we have built it up".

• The timing of the prorogation of Parliament (Simon Hughes, L.D., Southwark and Bermondsey)
• The success of the McLaren motor-racing team (Sir Cranley Onslow, C. Woking)
• The "low-status" Shadow Cabinet (John Sykes, C. Scarborough)
• Major's self-by and use-by dates (Robert Wareing, Lab, Liverpool West Derby)



Jeremy Corbyn (standing left) pinpointed specific NHS failings in London. Major replied that the NHS was creating more "consultants", "nurses", "and, er, patients".

Betty Boothroyd (standing right) reminded Hughes who was struggling to be heard above the din: "Spit it out, come on. There's no point in waiting for silence, the Hon. Gentleman is not going to get it."

Sykes: "What would my Rt. Hon. Friend do if all he had to choose from for the Cabinet was a group of failed teachers, a group of ex-trade union officials, one TV director and a pair of stewards?" Major, who once applied to become a bus conductor, avoided a direct answer.

Major told Hughes: "One of the reasons for making the announcement on Monday and arranging for Parliament to be prorogued Friday was to give the Hon. Gentleman time to finish his question."

Onslow: "Following the very successful visit this morning to the headquarters of the McLaren Formula One team in my constituency, would my Rt. Hon. Friend agree with me that what counts is not who is ahead at the first corner, but who has the skill, expertise, the stamina and the nerve to see the race right through to the winning post?"

Compiled by Ben Summers

Ken Clarke ahead in the new-wave fashion stakes

Jojo Moyes

As the poll war began in earnest, one question preoccupied political commentators and voters. Not the health service, nor education, but Ken Clarke - Is He or Isn't He?

Because, as the hairpray adverts of the 1970s so neatly put it, it appeared the Chancellor of the Exchequer's new hairstyle, swept back from his forehead in a dashing brown crest, may have had a little chemical help.

His usual leave-it-where-it-falls hairstyle had become, according to one onlooker, "a cross between Michael Portillo



Clarke: Image transplant

and Michael Heseltine". Under the lights of a news conference, it shone a deep shade of chestnut that looks likely to have

fashion followers demanding a "Ken". Yesterday's abrupt change of image - the hair, colour-coordinated pink tie against blue shirt, the suit a pale shade of taupe - suggested his latest bruising encounter had been with the image-makers.

According to Mary Spillane, of consultants Color Me Beautiful, the result was "just right".

"There's an element of cheeky machismo about him that is quintessentially British," she said. "They're trying to enhance his sexual appeal. They're playing him as their sex god... the colours are very European. It's also a subtle two fingers to the Euro-sceptics."

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The price of a packet of peanuts, contributed once a week by the average taxpayer, would make a dramatic improvement to education, Paddy Ashdown said yesterday.

Deploping the politicians' and media obsession with predictions, the Liberal Democrat leader told a campaign press conference: "What people want to hear is not predictions of an outcome that no one can predict, but that the parties stand for, how much will it cost and what will be the result."

Don Foster, the party's edu-

cation spokesman, said the Liberal Democrats would be pledging an extra £500m for the refurbishment of school buildings over the five-year lifetime of a Parliament, as part of its £2bn-a-year programme for education - and paid for by an extra penny in the pound on income tax. Mr Ashdown said that investment programme would cost the average taxpayer 45p a week.

"That's a packet of peanuts at a local pub," he said. "That's less than half a lottery ticket. But for that you really can do something to save teachers' jobs, to give kids in this country a chance of being in a class of 30

or no more by the end of the century, to give every child in this country pre-school education."

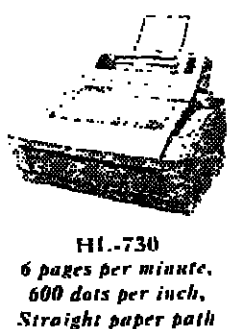
Mr Foster said his party's educational investment programme would also deliver a "very significant hike" in the money spent of books and equipment in schools.

"For example, in the first year, we're committed to an increase that would mean the average comprehensive school, with 1,000 pupils, would get £110,000, and the average primary school is going to get something in the region of £18,000 on top of the levels they already get."

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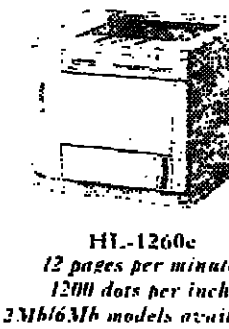
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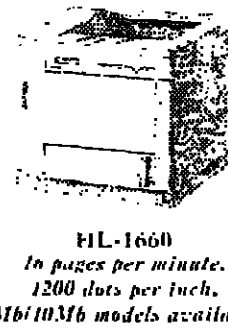
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election countdown

Sun readers left cold by decision to back Blair

Louise Jury

The Sun backed Blair and its readers besieged its telephone lines. Though there was a smattering of support for the switch of traditional allegiances yesterday, insiders said most of those calling in were from angry readers.

Dave Burgin, 28, an electrician from Essex, was puzzled by what he saw as the sudden volte face. "I was surprised, given what they have been saying for most of the last couple of years," he said.

A Tory voter last time, he said he intended to stay loyal to his party but not necessarily to his newspaper. "I don't know if I'll carry on reading the Sun if they go quite left," he said.

Clive Renno, 39, from Southampton - a colleague working with Mr Burgin on the refurbishment of a hotel in west London - also backed

the Tories last time but would be supporting no one this. "There are too many immigrants in this country and none of the parties do anything about it."

Whatever the Sun said would make no difference. "I don't believe most of what's in the papers anyway," he said. "But I'm surprised. They've always supported the Tory party before and they just suddenly changed."

Among the others working on the hotel refurbishment, most claimed not to read the politics at all - just the sport, the crossword, the cartoons, and even the agony aunt. Yesterday's picture of a female Newcastle United fan in a bikini emblazoned "Ginola" was also a hit. "But I don't read anything about Labour or Conservative," said the man serving up the fried breakfasts.

Martin Giles, 35, a plumber, said he was surprised at the backing for Blair, but it would

make no difference to him. "I'd have voted Labour anyway. So close to the election, I don't think it will make a difference."

Many were suspicious of its motives. Paul Dimond, 32, from Wales, said the switch in political allegiance was "two-faced as hell. Murdoch's a businessman, he's there to make money."

Martin Ord, 23, from Newcastle, said the minimum wage, not any editorial, would swing his vote. Builders fear a minimum wage will force their salaries down. So contrary to popular opinion, it really could be policies not presentation and polemic which decides the election result.

Simon Wilson, 29, the site manager from Leeds, said: "It's in the back of our mind that if Labour come in, we might get a fair crack - the Conservatives have killed the building industry. But more fool them if anybody takes notice of the Sun."



Reading room: Dave Burgin (left) and Clive Renno (centre) taking a break from work yesterday

Photograph: John Voss

BBC and ITV vie to host leaders' debate

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The three main party leaders agreed yesterday to appear on separate editions of BBC's *Question Time* programme to take questions from the audience while ITV and the BBC stepped up the fight to host a televised head-to-head debate between Tony Blair and John Major.

The two channels dispatched detailed proposals to the three main parties yesterday as Channel 4 and BBC2 revealed that they had both signed up the three contenders for Chancellor of the Exchequer. Chancellor Kenneth Clarke will join Labour's Gordon Brown and the Liberal Democrats' Malcolm Bruce in *Power and the People*, a television discussion on Channel 4 on 27 April. The three have agreed to be questioned on the economy by an audience of 300 selected to represent the British public.

The audience will be given impartial political briefings before being allowed to cross-examine in turn the candidates, and will be quizzed on their voting intentions before and after the politicians' answers.

After Easter, Peter Jay, the BBC's economics editor, will present a debate for BBC's *The Money Programme* on 6 April which will also put Mr Clarke, Mr Brown and Mr Bruce head to head.

ITV sent detailed proposals to the parties for a televised debate between their leaders yesterday and insisted that it was still in the running to host the debate. It is understood to be proposing having Mr Major and Mr Blair debating head to

head, followed immediately by a contribution from Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown.

However, the BBC has emerged as frontrunner by proposing three separate debates: Major-Ashdown, Blair-Ashdown and Major-Blair, which Liberal Democrat sources say they will accept.

The BBC also announced that the three leaders would ap-



Jay: Economic debate host

pear separately on a series of *Question Time* specials hosted by David Dimbleby from 3 April and take questions from the audience. The Scottish and Welsh nationalist party leaders would appear together in a separate programme.

Mr Ashdown said yesterday that 80 per cent of people wanted him to take part in a three-way contest with Mr Blair and Mr Major. He told GMTV it was "arrogant" for the Prime Minister or Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, to decide who would be included in the debate. The Tories have suggested that Mr Ashdown should not take part because he has little chance of getting to Downing Street.

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China rids itself of unwelcome guest

Teresa Poole
Peking

The story so far has had all the elements of a Cold War thriller. The question now is whether Hwang Jang Yop will enjoy a comfortable retirement in the free world, or soon become a victim of a North Korean hit squad.

Mr Hwang, the highest-level official ever to defect from the last hard-line Stalinist state, was believed to have spent last night in the northern Philippines town of Baguio after being spirited out of Peking yesterday morning. In Seoul, the South Korean spokesman, Lee Kyu Hyung, said: "With the co-operation of a third country we have him staying in a secure and safe place. He is under our control."

From the moment Mr Hwang sought refuge on 12 February in the consular section of the South Korean embassy in Peking, China had struggled to rid itself of a diplomatic nuisance. The trick was not to offend Pyongyang, with whom it formerly boasted a relationship "as close as lips and teeth", while dispatching Mr Hwang to his preferred goal of Seoul, with whom Peking enjoys a thriving trade relationship. Few countries were prepared to offer the defector a face-saving stopover, until the Philippines stepped in.

From his flight to the South Korean

North Korean defector is spirited away to Philippines

consulate in a Peking taxi, after shaking off his minders on a shopping trip, Mr Hwang's escape has been the stuff of spy drama. The 73-year-old ranked 24th in Pyongyang's political hierarchy, and was one of the ideologues of North Korea's political dogma.

Initially the defection flushed out the legions of North Koreans in Peking, who staked out the consular building with their lapel badges of the late Great Leader, Kim Il Sung, unprecedentedly pinned inside their jackets. Chinese armoured personnel carriers and soldiers soon ringed the compound, a wise precaution given at least one attempt at infiltration by a North Korean commando squad.

Yesterday's journey out of China started with a ruse, a Sunday-night decoy convoy of dark-windowed minibuses which travelled from the consulate to the airport. But it was not until Monday evening that they repeated the show - with the real Mr Hwang on board. There was heavy Chinese security around all South Korean buildings.

China breathed a quiet sigh of re-

lief after seeing Mr Hwang reach the Philippines alive. For the past five weeks Peking has been walking a diplomatic tightrope. So sensitive is the incident, that all that was said in a terse official statement last night was that Mr Hwang had left of his own free will. Mr Hwang is expected to spend at least a week in the Philippines before proceeding to South Korea, where he faces life under protective armed guard.

The defector leaves behind in North Korea a family which, if widespread reports can be believed, faces execution or dispatch to the labour camps. Demoted from their privileged existence, they, like all ordinary North Koreans, will be hungry.

The executive director of the World Food Programme, Catherine Bertini, yesterday flew back to Peking after a fact-finding mission in North Korea. Centrally distributed food rations had dropped to 350 calories a day, except for people taking part in manual-labour programmes to restore land damaged in the floods of 1995 and 1996, she said. Children were suffering from stunted growth. Roots and dried leaves were all that was available to augment the meagre rations, which will soon run out unless international food aid is stepped up, Ms Bertini added. A new WFP appeal will attempt to reach all children under six.



Fall out: A Greenpeace boat in action during the arrival yesterday of the Pacific Teal in Japan

Photograph: Reuters

Japanese give atom-waste ship a hot reception

Richard Lloyd Parry
Tokyo

A British ship carrying highly radioactive plutonium waste was met by protesters in Japan yesterday, a week after the country's most serious nuclear accident. Some 300 demonstrators turned out for the arrival of the *Pacific Teal*, which docked at the village of Rokkasho.

Two Greenpeace boats sailed close to the vessel and activists displayed banners saying "No Nuclear Waste" and "Stop Nuclear Power". There was a scuffle with police but by yesterday evening unloading of the cargo was well under way.

The vessel's 20 tons of nuclear waste was the second such shipment under an agreement between Japanese utilities and European power companies - British Nuclear Fuels and Cogema of France. Japan has limited facilities for reprocessing and sends spent fuel rods abroad via long sea routes, which have provoked international unease about their vulnerability to accident or

terrorist attack. The reprocessed waste is shipped back to Japan in vitrified blocks, which will be stored in Rokkasho for as long as 50 years before being buried. Environmentalists say the waste is so radioactive that an unshielded bystander would receive a lethal dose in less than a minute.

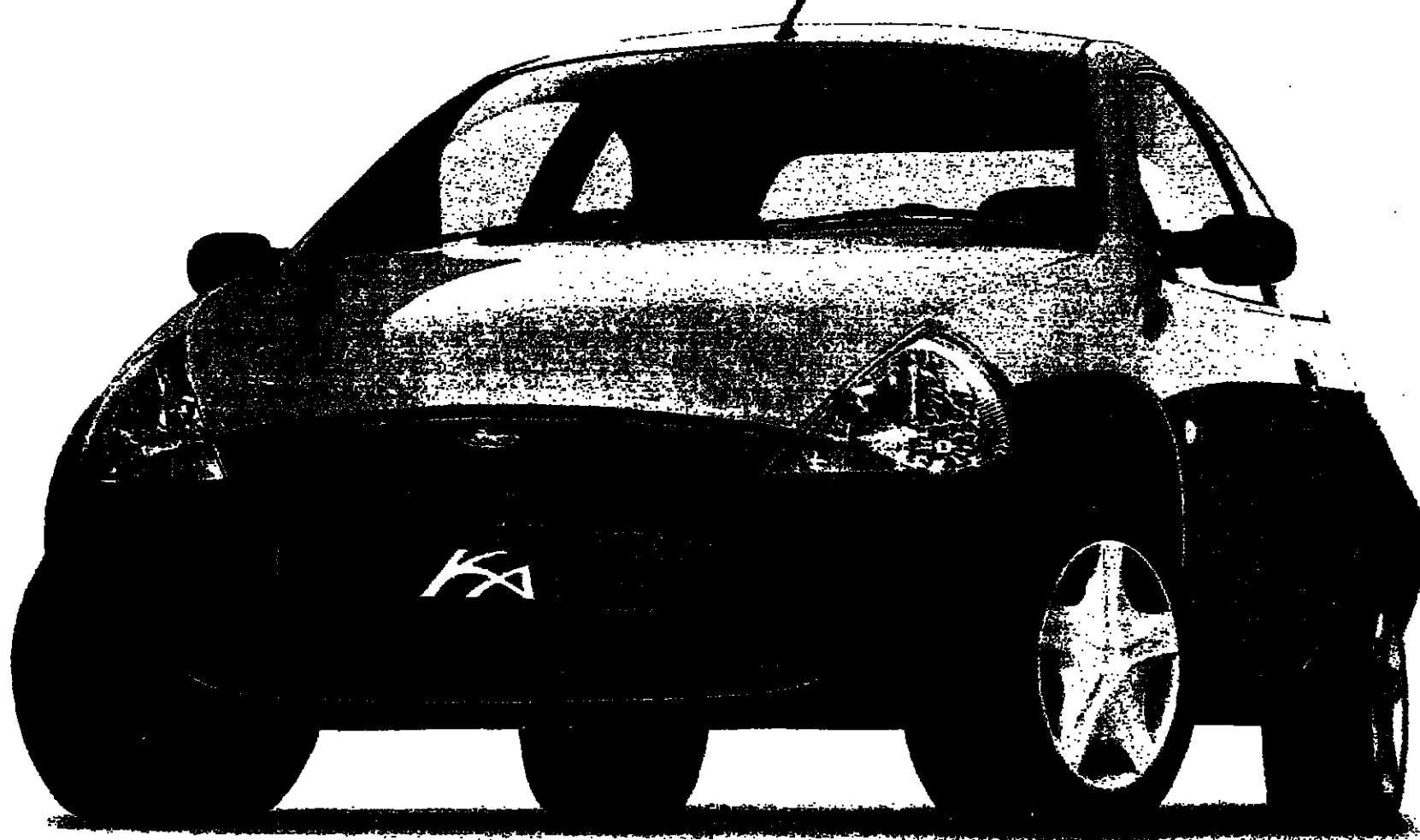
A week before the *Pacific Teal* arrived, a fire and explosion at the country's only reprocessing facility released radiation and contaminated 37 workers.

The authorities at the Tokai plant insist that the amounts of radioactivity which were released were negligible but every day has brought disclosures about a number of communication failures and breaches of official procedure.

Yesterday Japanese newspapers reported that the central government turned a blind eye to short cuts in fireproofing the ill-fated plant.

Central and local government officials were not informed until hours after the fire, which was allowed to smoulder unattended and cause the later, potentially lethal explosion.

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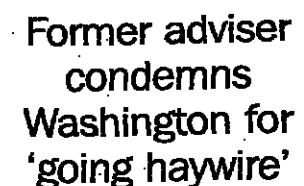
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That sense of security could diminish if Nato's enlargement goes wrong and Russian-Western relations deteriorate. "Finland is striving to ensure that neither Nato enlargement nor whatever treaty arrangement the alliance arrives at with Russia leads to the emergence of lines of division or spheres of interest that would detract from stability in northern Europe," the government report says. There is particular concern for the Baltic states, above all Estonia, to which Finns feel closest.



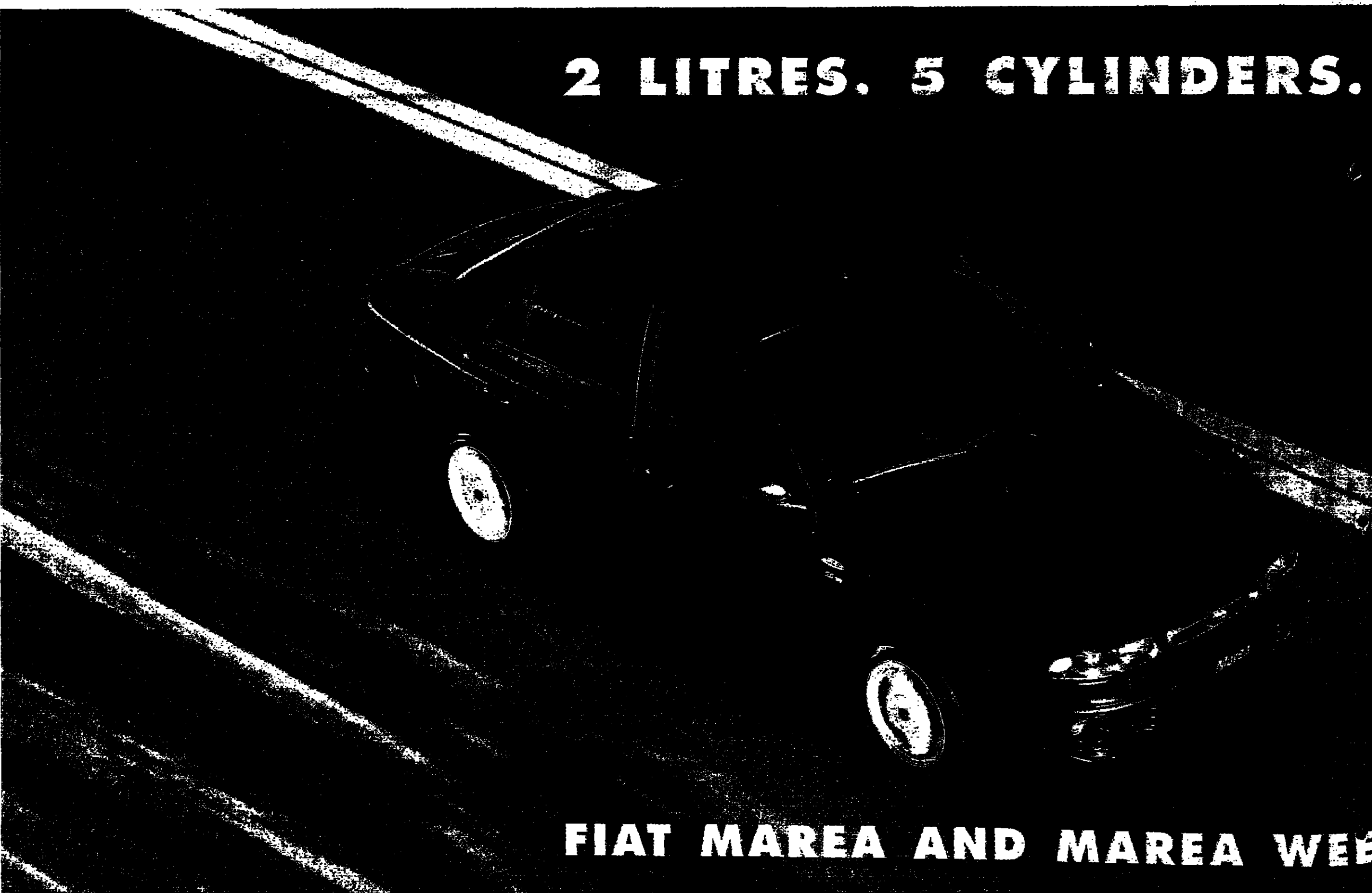
Clinton's CIA nominee gives up in disgust

But new obstacles, notably press reports alleging the Democratic National Committee improperly lobbied the National Security Council and the CIA for favourable treatment for a Lebanese-American cam-



None however has Mr Lake's access and long intimacy with the President. And whoever survives ordeal by Senator Shelby will have the dubious distinction of being the CIA's fifth director in six years, a list which does not include two nominees who withdrew their nomination. The job turnover is a measure of the disarray of an agency celebrated not for its quiet successes, but for front-page failures like the Ames espionage case.

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KGB's fight to counter the cunning chaps in smart suits

Moscow - During the Cold War, agents at the KGB school at Balashikha, outside Moscow, were taught that the CIA was the *glavny protivnik*, or main enemy. But they were told to pay special attention to the British, for they had a reputation as the most subtle spies.

Even today Russians love to hate the pinstripe-suited, two-faced Briton as much if not more than the loud American. During last year's presidential election, the nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy told Russians to be on the alert for foreign spies of all nationalities but in particular to be cautious of the perfidious British.

"The Russian stereotype of the British is that they are cunning and hypocritical," said Mikhail Lyubimov, head of the British section at KGB headquarters after being expelled from London in 1965. The KGB's wariness of the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, was based on more than prejudice. SIS, founded in 1909, was older than Soviet intelligence or the CIA and therefore perceived to have the advantage of experience. Also, Britain had a long history of rivalry with Russia.

"Britain was afraid of tsarist Russian influence in India and Afghanistan. We saw you as being not only anti-Soviet but Russophobic well before the Bolshevik Revolution," Col



In the latest of our series, a former spymaster tells **Helen Womack** that old espionage habits die hard

Lyubimov said over a cup of tea in his Moscow flat. In 1917 Britain was still the *glavny protivnik*, as the CIA had not been formed. "Britain did all in its power to help those who opposed the Bolsheviks," said Col Lyubimov, now a writer. But by

by, Burgess, Maclean, Cairncross and Blunt, were recruited. But they were just the tip of the iceberg. "I can't name names but there were many more," he said. How many? "We're talking in the tens." During the Second World

of what the British knew as a result of having cracked the Germans' Enigma code, which enabled Stalin to see Churchill was not sharing all his information with him.

In an atmosphere of mistrust, war turned into cold war, the main source of friction after 1945 being the future of East Europe. Col Lyubimov said the Russians were impressed by the British performance in the struggle for influence over this region. But they were fighting a losing battle and many SIS agents were caught, in part thanks to Philby. For example, 16 Polish generals accused of spying for Britain on Soviet territory were executed, and a British spy called Felix Rammies was arrested in Latvia. "As you British say, 'It is not the winning

that counts but playing the game,'" chuckled the colonel.

With the defection of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean in 1951, SIS entered a long period of crisis as it searched for the Third Man. Philby, who fled to Moscow in 1963. Before that, he had been MI6's representative at Langley, Virginia, which meant the British lost much credibility with the increasingly powerful CIA. Moscow now paid more attention to the activities of the Americans.

Col Lyubimov thinks the traitor who did most damage to the Soviet Union was the military intelligence officer Oleg Penkovsky, who passed secrets to the British businessman Greville Wynne. Thanks to Penkovsky, the West realised Khrushchev was bluffing during

the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Penkovsky was executed; Wynne, who was sentenced to eight years in prison, was later swapped for the Soviet spy, Gordon Lonsdale.

Recruiting agents on Soviet soil was difficult for the British,

Russians believe they intercepted all their citizens who approached or were approached by the British in Moscow.

Which is why SIS preferred to recruit Russians in London or third countries. Their most famous catch of recent years was

Patriotism and perfidy: Some of the personalities, real and fictional, who inhabited the dark world of espionage: Maclean (left), Philby, Bond, Wynne and Burgess

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee



ly believed, in a diplomatic removal van.

The SIS also recruited Ivan Kuzichkin in Iran and Viktor Suvorov in Geneva. Mr Kuzichkin provided information on Moscow's relations with the illegal Iranian Communist Party, while Mr Suvorov revealed military secrets, including details of the operations of the Spetsnaz special forces.

The Cold War is over but last year a tit-for-tat expulsion incident between Moscow and London caused a brief icy blast from the past. Four Russian diplomats were ordered out of Britain after the same number of British diplomats were expelled from Moscow for having contacts with a young Russian called Platon Obukhov. Mr Obukhov, now awaiting trial for treason, claims that he was gathering material for the latest of the popular spy novels which he writes.

Some observers suggested President Boris Yeltsin needed a dispute with Britain, normally now seen as a friendly country, to look tough before the presidential elections.

But Col Lyubimov dismissed this theory, saying there was never smoke without fire: he was sure the British diplomats had been up to something.

"They failed and I can only sympathise with them," said the KGB veteran who, in 1965, was set up by two men "smelling of fish" in a London pub and declared *persona non grata* in the country he regards as his second home.

Col Lyubimov said the Obukhov case had contributed to a new Russian suspicion about the British in the era after the Cold War. "Now again, after the euphoria of the post-Communist period, when we thought we could co-operate, mistrust has returned. I personally don't see a threat but our secret services still think in terms of perfidious Albion. It will take centuries for the cliché to die."

Philby and Burgess ... the tip of the iceberg



Russians love to hate the two-faced Briton



said Col Lyubimov. "KGB surveillance was extremely strong." Back-up staff at embassies were all from the Russian service to diplomats, which automatically reported to the KGB. Rooms and telephones were bugged. Unless they are mistaken, the

the former London KGB resident Oleg Gordievsky, who began betraying his country in the 1970s, when he worked at the Soviet embassy in Copenhagen.

Found out in 1985, he made a dramatic escape to Britain from Moscow hidden, it is wide-

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obituaries / gazette

Victor Vasarely

Victor Vasarely was the kind of artist we in Britain call Constructivist and push aside as an inartistic intellectual. He was admired in France since he turned from graphic art to painting in the mid-1940s, and famous globally since the mid-1960s when he finalised the system that made his art uniquely accessible as well as adaptable. By the end of the 1950s he was working with small square units, in metal or plastic, on which squares or circles were printed, and also trapezoids, diamonds and ovals (suggesting squares and circles seen obliquely). Assembling these in what seemed an infinity of variations, he could play local colour and pattern events against the optically induced larger forms of the whole. The next step was to produce these units as purchasable sets with their help we would all become artists, making pictures or murals, or indeed covering whole buildings to our own satisfaction.

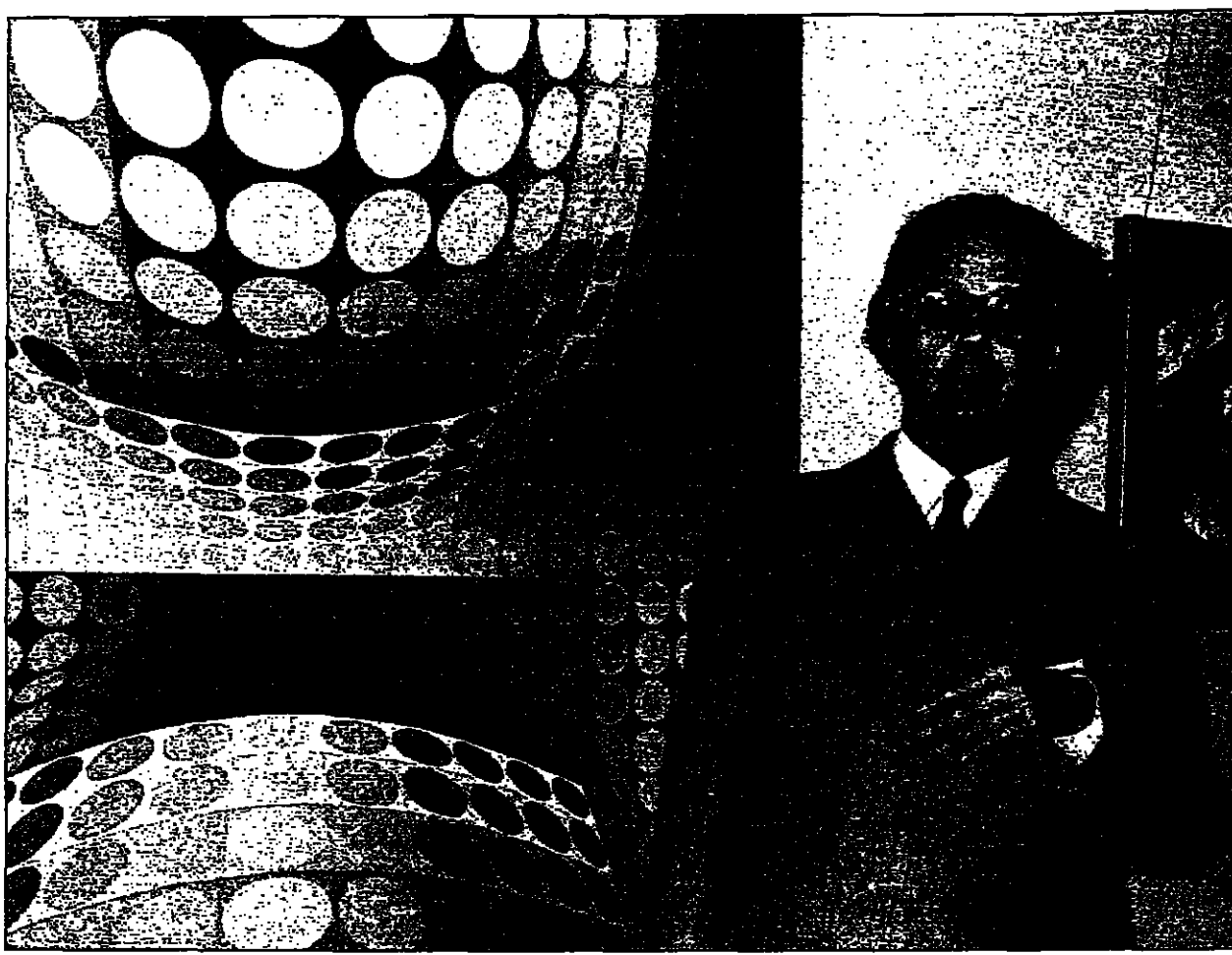
The idea was right for the outgoing Sixties. "Everyone his own artist" was a long history – going back at least to Mozart's list of musical phrases to be chosen by rolling dice. But Vasarely's kits were never cheap and the art market has always preferred to deal with unique collectables offering good profit margins. There was a broad movement into creating potentially mass-producible "multiples" to which many artists contributed, but the many artists passed.

It was natural for Vasarely to see himself as an international figure, a prophet and activator as much as an inventor and maker. But then he was born in Hungary, in 1908, and like a number of other Hungarians – most obviously Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 13 years older – he gave his innate romanticism expres-

sion through figurative, semi-Expressionist paintings and drawings during his student years at the Budapest Academy before, through further studies at an art school run by Sándor Bortnik, an old friend of Moholy's, deriving his ideas from the German Bauhaus (and thus in part from Moholy), and opting to focus the same emotional energies on a more concentrated artistic programme.

Vasarely moved to Paris in 1930, married and had two sons, the younger of whom grew up into the well-known artist Vjarsal. He worked at first as a graphic artist and designer, but in 1944 decided to paint again. He had his first Paris solo exhibition that year, at the Galerie Denise René which became and remains prominent as a gallery specialising in abstract geometrical and kinetic art in two and three dimensions. He painted monochrome compositions in which the forms of such creatures as harlequins or zebras were key motifs for an exploration of flat patterns and illusions of space. When he dropped the images his compositions became more diagrammatic and more explosive in their visual effect. Some of these were multi-level transparencies, hinged together so that their relative positions could be varied and the view through their overlapping linear designs made more, or less, dramatic. In the late 1950s he began to explore optical kinetics in large paintings, gradually introducing barely perceptible colours into arrangements that seemed to be of black and white only.

By 1965 Vasarely and Bridget Riley were seen as leaders of an international movement no one had founded or intended, but which was celebrated in New York in the Museum of



Prophet and activator as much as inventor and maker: Vasarely in New York, 1978

Photograph: Hulton Getty

Modern Art's exhibition of 1965, "The Responsive Eye". From this time on also dates the public's general loss of interest in Op Art as an abstract form of *trompe-l'œil* picture-making. It astonished, it dazzled, it could even give one a headache, but it couldn't entertain like Pop Art. Many practitioners of Op opted out or were merely forgotten, but Vasarely and Riley (a generation younger than him) moved on to higher things. In Riley's case these have been ever richer and more refreshing colour compositions derived from experiences of nature: in Vasarely's they were philosophical as well as artistic, leading him into further study of the visual functioning of simple geometrical forms. Singly and in

ordered masses, of their capacity for conveying sensations to everyone, and thence also of the practical means whereby artistic compositions of this sort might be done by everyone. The "democratisation of art" became his prime concern, and in this he was a true Constructivist – Russian Constructivism had focused Modernism's urge for basics on the desperate needs of a society ruined by war, revolution and civil war. He exhibited busily around the world from 1960 on and into the 1980s. He also founded a Vasarely Institution at Gordes in France and another, directed towards architectural development, at Aix-en-Provence, as well as a Vasarely Museum at Pecs in Hungary.

Some loss of public interest in his work and ideas plus the general recession have recently occasioned the closing of the Aix institute, and the artist's death shortly before his 90th birthday may mark the end of a chapter in modern art as well as his own career. But his contribution was an important one in a century that has demanded vast feats of self-invention from some of its artists whilst others have queried the value of individual, self-revealing creativity.

In asserting "I fight for the debunking of the artist and an end to individual pictures", Vasarely was placing himself at the opposite end to that at which we like to find our artists, compensating for the limited

imaginative and expressive lives we lead ourselves with their dramatic, heart-on-sleeve, often over-the-top productions. But some would argue that the deepest passion demands the most controlled expression. We have the tradition of, say, Bach, Poussin and Mondrian to prove it. Vasarely was of their persuasion, and his contribution to that tradition is all the more remarkable in that it was made in a context of post-war figurative and abstract expressionism and of art-market forces.

Norbert Lynton

Gyozee Vasarely (Victor Vasarely), artist: born Pecs, Hungary 9 April 1908; married 1930 Claire Spinner (died 1991; two sons); died Paris 15 March 1997.

Cecil Wilson



Wilson: 55 years a critic

Cecil Wilson's dramatic and film criticism reflected the man: quiet, courteous, pointed but not stinging, sane not vain, reluctant to be taken in by the latest trend from Hollywood, Sweden or France and rarely caught going out on a critical limb; but a critic to trust.

Although he must have had a wider readership on the *Daily Mail* from 1938 to 1990 than most of his Fleet Street contemporaries, Wilson never went about as if he knew it. He knew that criticism must be personal, yet saw no reason to introduce himself into his writing more than was necessary. Yet this unassuming, bespectacled man, whose only concession to sartorial effect was a bow tie, survived the up and downs of front-line Fleet Street journalism for over half a century on one paper.

His vigil for the *Daily Mail* – as, successively, Northern theatre critic, entertainment correspondent, theatre critic, assistant theatre and film critic, acting dramatic critic, chief dramatic critic, chief film critic and old film tipster for television viewers – began before the Second World War.

Trained, from 17, as a reporter on a South London group of local papers, Wilson landed himself a job in 1935 in the Northern office of the *Daily Mail* in Manchester, through the influence of a benevolent and journalistically distin-

guished elder brother, the drama critic A.E. Wilson. On his first day's employment he was sent to the first night of a try-out of Noël Coward's new triple bill. The eager young Wilson scribbled back to the office at the fall of the curtain in the tradition of the London dramatic critics and promptly knocked out on his typewriter a notice of *To-night* at 7.30.

Within the hour he breathlessly placed his copy in the night news editor's in-tray. A few minutes later, a voice growled: "What the hell's all this?"

"Well, you sent me to cover the Noël Coward opening, sir. There's my review."

"Yes, to cover the first night, not the play. We leave that to London."

"But the first night was the play..."

"No, no. We wanted a news

story. Interviews. A back-stage angle. Something personal from Coward or Gertrude Lawrence... Oh well, it's too late now," sighed the night news editor.

Wilson was crestfallen. He had muffed his first job. Half an hour later the night editor came in: "What are your initials?"

"C.F.W.", answered Wilson. He presumed they would be needed for his letter of dismissal. The next day his notice came out as he wrote it, signed C.F.W.

For the next 55 years, except for war service in the RAF, Wilson trod the path which he had dreamed of following ever since his brother had inspired his ambition to join the same profession. Together the brothers made a bit of post-war Fleet Street history by working side by side as drama critics for London dailies from 1945 to 1954, the one for the *Daily Mail*, the other for the evening paper the *Star*.

Long before today's new technology, Wilson would park his car in a street near the theatre, scribble his notice at a certain-fall, then search for a public telephone from which to dictate his review to copy-typists within the hour. Among the more challenging first nights, in an era before previews when overnight reviewers had little time for reflection, were *Look Back in Anger* (1956) by John Osborne and *The Birthday Party* (1967) by Harold Pinter.

Of the then unknown John Osborne's play Wilson wrote: "They have not discovered a masterpiece, but they have discovered a masterpiece of outstanding promise... What a brilliant play this young man will write when he has got this one out of his system and let a little sunshine into his soul."

Of Pinter's famous failure, *The Birthday Party*, Wilson wrote: "One snag about being an underdog is that with all those hours to kill in the dressing room you are liable to write plays like *The Birthday Party*. No doubt it was under the Royal Court's intellectual influence that he wrote this baffling mixture."

Wilson never claimed to be an intellectual; and after a few seasons of increasingly obscure new plays in the vogue which came to be called the New Wave, he was not altogether distressed to find himself, from 1960, making way for a provocative young newcomer named Robert Muller, whom the *Mail* engaged to oppose the brilliant new critic for the *Daily Express*, Bernard Levin.

Wilson turned to show-business gossip and theatre news for two years, which involved much travel and more congenial working conditions; and then he succeeded the *Daily Mail*'s film critic Fred Majdalany for his last 12 years on the staff.

Adam Benedict

Cecil Frank Petch Wilson, drama and film critic: born Margate, Kent 10 September 1909; married Margaret Kelly (deceased), 1991 Grace Mages; died Seaford, East Sussex 17 March 1997.

Leslie Lowe

The music publisher Leslie Lowe spent his entire working life in and around music, beginning with the BBC when he was only 14 years old.

Born in Bangor, North Wales, he joined the BBC there, where the entertainment departments happened to have been evacuated during the early part of the Second World War. When National Service called he was most proud to serve with the Welsh Guards. After the war he returned to the BBC, this time working in the London Gramophone Library, serving out in the Light Programme and the Home Service.

In 1954 he left to join the Lorna Music Company as its professional manager – and so began his life's career in music publishing. Although never actually an "A&R man" (as artists' managers are known in the recording industry), he was the shadowy figure behind dozens of pop singers of the Sixties and Seventies, including Helen Shapiro, Maureen Evans, and Clinton Ford – with a ceaseless search for suitable material for their recording careers. He moved on through 20th Century Fox Music and Burlington Music (the publishing arm of the Decca Record Company) to managerial positions at CBS Songs, United Artists, and SBK Publishing, finally coming to rest at EMI Music before retirement.

But the "retirement" was from music publishing only, for that was

just part of his work. Throughout his publishing life he had worked on a book, *The Directory of Popular Music*, and, in 1975, this epic work appeared in print, to the gratitude and delight of media producers, presenters and DJs. It contains a wealth of information about the world's greatest songs, who wrote, published and recorded them – including record numbers, film credits, stage productions, Academy Award nominations, theme songs and signature tunes. By 1986 it had run to a second edition, and then a third in 1992. He was still working on an updated and much-expanded fourth edition at the time of his death – leaving the work filed in his computer. The British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors awarded Lowe its Gold Badge of Merit in 1982 for services to the music publishing industry.

Staunch and avuncular, Lowe was easily recognised by his lanky figure, thin as a beanpole and bald with it. In 1975, in order to introduce his new book to radio producers, he held a luncheon for a few friends, intended to be a small-scale gathering. It became a regular monthly event, a dozen or so regularly turning up, and still continues.

Brian Willey

Leslie Lowe, music publisher: born Bangor, Caernarfonshire 4 April 1926; married 1948 Babette (Bobbi) Bowbrick; died Hastings, East Sussex 3 March 1997.

Dr Anthony Hopkins

Anthony Hopkins, Director of the Research Unit at the Royal College of Physicians since 1988, was a most distinguished and unusual figure in the world of medicine.

His appointment in 1972 as Consultant Neurologist at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, was controversial. To Bart's, a hospital which had then the reputation of appointing its own, he was a foreigner, having trained at Guy's. At 35 he was thought too young, and too inexperienced clinically. He had come from the stable of the National Hospital, Queen Square, where he had trained under Roger Gilliat, whose reputation for academic accuracy, if sometimes combined with an acerbic tongue, occasionally broke through in Hopkins's own manner.

But he continued to climb, becoming Physician in Charge of the Department of Neurological Sciences at Bart's in 1976. In clinical neurology, he was before his time in many developments. He established "hub and spoke" links (links between the Teaching Hospital and District General Hospital) in the Bart's department some 15 years before it became a term used by the NHS Executive and others. He realised not only that it improved clinical practice and quality of consultant staff, but that it would become a necessity for the survival of specialised units in a changing NHS. We noted, however, that Hopkins remained very much at the centre of the hub.

Major clinical research projects followed, in diverse fields, as he established a neurological department. With Dr Richard Greenwood he carried out tests studying changes in the reflexes in subjects falling from a height, dropping even Edward, his infant youngest son, as part of his research.

A perceptive (and quite unconnected) study on the everyday problem of headaches followed. One of the commonest symptoms of human beings, headaches had been studiously disregarded by most neurologists until Hopkins addressed the subject. Collaborating with sociologists, rather than doctors, he measured the size of the problem, pointing out the cost of 1,600 people per 100,000 consulting a doctor for headache each year, while fewer than 10 had any serious disease.

Several studies on the epidemiology of epilepsy followed, resulting in the publication of *Epilepsy* (1987). Finally, with Dr Elizabeth Davies, he turned to the care of patients with malignant brain tumours, recording in meticulous detail the care which this unfortunate group of patients and their families actually receive. His findings were roundly criticised, having irritated the cancer doctors' establishment, but he was very ready to defend them – and his last words on this matter will be published posthumously.

One common theme ran through these studies. They recorded and researched what happened, for better or worse,

to patients, in a general population rather than in an ideal medical setting. Each, in its way, remains a landmark study. Whilst he gave a first-class clinical opinion, medicine at the bedside was not his forte. He was able to acknowledge this to those close to him, confessing impatience and irritation. It was however in his writing about clinical events that he portrayed a softer side, and one of deep human understanding. *Clinical Neurology: a modern approach* (1993) is an example of economy of style, readability and clinical wisdom.

His mid-consultant career was marred by some personal disappointment. He failed to be appointed to the Chair of Medicine at Bart's, and later to the post of Dean of the Medical School, his applications an indication that he was looking for a role as a leader in the profession. In an unusual but wise move for a clinician, he then flourished in a hospital, he left Bart's in 1988 to become Director of the Research Unit of the Royal College of Physicians, a post where he could develop his interests in Health Economics, Clinical Effectiveness, Audit and Outcome. He soon penetrated the NHS Executive, and sat on seven of its advisory groups, though he indicated that many colleagues there frustrated him because "they seemed to change their minds so often, following political fashion".

Numerous other appointments followed, from work with the Chief Economist on quality and effectiveness measures, through a galaxy of Royal College committees, to liaison with patient support groups, the editorial boards of six journals and the King's Fund Centre Committee. If these were not enough, in addition he managed to be the main author of 10 major publications in the last year.

Those of us who respected his intellect found ourselves a lifelong ally, and one who was ready to understand our anxieties, and to encourage unusual career moves. Hopkins was suspicious of the present trend of increasing dogged specialism and questioned the value and the effect of cloning specialists who, he argued, would have to carry out progressively mundane work as their numbers increased.

In the weeks before he died, Hopkins was proposed as one of eight candidates for the forthcoming Presidency of the Royal College of Physicians. Whether he would have succeeded remains conjecture, but the seven survivors who strive for election would do well to heed his understanding of that savage arena between Government, health care and the medical profession itself.

To his friends Anthony Hopkins seemed on the threshold of a new era. This slightly gaunt figure, with a lifelong ambling gait, a shock of dark hair, piercing brown eyes and a slight smile was unmistakable. Our friendship lasted nearly 20 years, but for many others he was not an easy man, particularly when a combination of his intellectual crispness and caustic turn of phrase clashed with the medical establishment. It is hard to capture this complex, resolute soul.

Charles Clarke
Anthony Philip Hopkins, neurologist: born Pwll, Dorset 15 October 1937; Consultant Neurologist, St Bartholomew's Hospital 1972-76; Physician in Department of Neurological Sciences 1976-88; Director, Research Unit, Royal College of Physicians, London 1988-97; married 1965 Elizabeth Wood (three sons); died London 7 March 1997.

Hopkins: intellectual crispness

Asylum-seeker's damages claim was barred

LAW REPORT

W v Home Office Court of Appeal (Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Thorpe, Lord Justice Waller) 19 February 1997

19 March 1997

The Home Office did not owe a duty of care to an asylum-seeker, whose detention had been unnecessarily protracted by the negligence of the immigration officers responsible for interviewing him, so as to enable him to sue the Home Office for damages for negligence.

The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by the plaintiff, an asylum-seeker from Liberia referred to as "W" to protect his identity, against a preliminary ruling of Sir Michael Davies, sitting as a High Court judge on 6 June 1996, in favour of the Home Office.

It was claimed that, as a result of the negligence of immigration officers, he had wrongfully been detained pending resolution of his asylum claim. It was alleged that interviews of W had been conducted negligently and that the (unsatisfactory) answers to some of his interview had negligently been placed in W's file, causing his detention to be extended beyond the date when it should have ended. The Home Office accepted that er-

rors had been made but denied liability in negligence.

The issues raised were (1) whether the Home Office owed W a duty of care; and (2) whether, if his detention was increased by the Home Office's negligence, the additional period of detention constituted loss or damage in respect of which damages could be awarded.

Nicholas Blake QC and Tim Owen (Winstanley Burgess) for W; John Howell QC and Robin Tam (Treasury Solicitor) for the Home Office.

Lord Woolf MR, giving a judgment of the court, said it was important to stress that what was done by or on behalf of the defendant was done pursuant to a statutory regulatory scheme for the control of immigration into the UK of those who had no right to enter or remain. That scheme was contained in the Immigration Act 1971.

It was accepted that, under this scheme, individuals requiring leave to enter enjoyed no right or presumption of entitlement to be at large before leave was granted. A wide discretion was given to immigra-

tion officers not only whether to admit detain or release but also in respect of the investigations they were entitled to make. The relevant statutory provisions were concerned with the giving of authority to detain; actual detention was in the hands of other persons.

It was not contested that the plaintiff was lawfully detained at all times. Nor was it contended that an invalid decision authorising detention made the detention unlawful.

The powers given to immigration officers were quintessentially those which were enforced by judicial review. No cause of action existed giving a right to damages for breach of a statutory duty and no such breach was alleged. The plaintiff sought to rely on the tort of negligence, in the form of "negligent detention".

The principles to be applied in determining whether a duty of care arose were well established. For a duty of care to arise, there must, *inter alia*, be a relationship of sufficient "proximity" between the party owing the duty and the party to whom it was owed. The

mere existence of a relationship brought about by one party exercising a statutory power vis-à-vis another was not itself sufficient to found proximity.

The process whereby a decision-making body gathered information and came to its decision could not be the subject of an action in negligence. It sufficed to rely on the absence of the required proximity.

In gathering information and taking it into account the defendant's officers were acting pursuant to their statutory powers and within that area of their discretion where only deliberate abuse would amount to a private remedy. For them to owe a duty of care to immigrants would be inconsistent with the proper performance of their responsibilities as immigration officers.

In the circumstances, it was not fair or reasonable to impose liability for negligence in the case of an immigration officer performing his public duty. The first preliminary issue would therefore be answered in favour of the Home Office. The second point therefore need not be decided, but their Lordships would have decided it in the plaintiff's favour.

Paul Magrath, Barrister

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorials, etc.) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephone 0171-233 2010. (24-hour answering machine 0171-233 2012) or faxed to 0171-233 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (weddings, funerals, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Appointments

Miss Glynn Evans, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Chile. Mr David Fall, to be Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Mr David Datta, to be British High Commissioner to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Mr Roy Osborne, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Nicaragua. Mr William Marsden, to be Ambassador to the Argentine Republic. Mr Christopher Hulse, to be Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen has the pleasure of announcing that Her Majesty will be married to the Duke of Edinburgh on 19 June 1997. The Duke of Edinburgh is the son of the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and the late Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. The Duke of Edinburgh is a member of the British Royal Family and is a descendant of the British Royal Family. The Duke of Edinburgh is a member of the British Royal Family and is a descendant of the British Royal Family. The Duke of Edinburgh is a member of the British Royal Family and is a descendant of the British Royal Family.

Birthdays

Miss Ursula Andrews, actress, 61; Sir Nigel Brookfield, ambassador to Germany, 60; Miss Gloria Cline, actress, 51; Lady Georgina Coleridge, journalist, 81; Mr Peter Cotes, theatrical director and producer, 85; Professor Ronald Girdwood, former President, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 80; The Right Rev Ronald Gordon, former Bishop of Lambeth, 70; Mr Bryan Hildrew, former managing director, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 77; Vice-Admiral Sir Norman King, former chairman, Buckinghamshire Health Authority, 64; Sir David Lumsden, former Principal, Royal Academy of Music, 69; Mr Paul Marland MP, 57; Sir Peter Massfield, President, Brooklands Museum Trust, 83; Mr Philip Mason, novelist, 91; Lord Plunkett of Highfield, Master, St Catherine's College, Oxford, 52; Li-Gin Sir Alan Reay, Chief Honorary Steward, Westminster Abbey, 72; Mr Philip Roth, novelist, 64; Sir Leonard Scope, former diplomat, 85; Mr Bruce Willis, actor, 42; Miss Mary Wimbush, actress, 73.

Anniversaries

Births: George de la Tour, painter, 1593; Tobias George Smollett, physician and author, 1721; Charles Watton Wentworth, second Marquis of Rockingham, statesman, 1730; Dr David Livingstone, explorer and missionary, 1813; Sir Richard Francis Burton, scholar and explorer, 1821; William Allingham, poet, 1824; Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev, founder of the ballet company, 1872; Max Regger, teacher and composer, 1873; Sir John Hubert Marshall, archaeologist, 1876; Deaths: Thomas Kilgrew, playwright, 1683; René

Robert Cavellier, Sieur de la Salle, explorer, murdered by his own men in Texas 1687; Mary Anning, finder of an Ichthyosaurus fossil, 1847; William Henry Pritchard, architect, 1857; George Richmond, painter, 1896; Antoine-Thomaz d'Aboville, explorer and scientist, 1897; Arthur James Balfour, first Earl Balfour, statesman, 1930; Edgar Rice Burroughs, novelist and creator of "Tarzan", 1950. On this day: The Rev John White formed the New England Company in Massachusetts Bay, 1628; the US Senate refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations Covenant, 1920; the opera *Furor* by Gounod was performed in Paris for the first time, 1859; Sydney Harbour bridge was officially opened, 1932; following an internal dispute, British parachute troops took over the Caribbean island of Anguilla, 1969; Willi Brandt and Willi Stoph, heads of West and East Germany, met for the first time at Erfurt, 1976; during a severe gale, the 1,260-foot tele-tower mast at Emley Moor, Yorkshire, crashed to the ground, 1970. Today is the Feast Day of St Almund, prince of Northumbria, St John of Passau, St Joseph (husband of the Virgin) and St Landulf.

Lectures

National Gallery: Christopher Baker, "The Italian Baroque (III): Salvator 'the Savage' Rosa", 1pm; James Fenton, "Leonardo's Nephew", 6.30pm. British Museum: Paul Croudock, "Exposing fakes and forgeries", 1.15pm. Tate Gallery: Jonathan Blackwood, "On the Cop of Modernity: Pre-decree British art", 1pm.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Imogen Stewart, "Inspiration from Ancient Greece in 20th-century Dress", 2.30pm. Loughborough University: Dr Peter Warwick, "100 Years of Radioactivity", 7pm.

Dinners

RAF Strike Command
Capt G.S. Harker presided at a Dining In Night held yesterday evening in the Officers' Mess, Headquarters Strike Command, RAF High Wycombe, to mark the retirement of Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon, Chief of the Air Staff, from the Royal Air Force.

Institute of the Motor Industry
Prince Michael of Kent, President of the Institute of the Motor Industry, presided over the Institute's Annual Dinner held yesterday evening at the Savoy Hotel, London W1. Mr Steven Norris MP was the guest speaker.

Queen Mary and Westfield College

Sir Christopher France, Chairman of Council, Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, presided at an Honorary Degrees and Fellowship Ceremony held yesterday at the College, London E1. Mr Peter Brooke MP, Mr Martin R. Harris, Dame Anne Mueller and Professor Sir John Vane were admitted as Honorary Fellows of the college. Professor Graham Zelikoff, Principal, conferred Honorary Degrees of London University on Sir Gordon Higginson, Lord Steyn, and Ms Janet Suzman. Ms Suzman delivered the Drapers' Lecture.

Danger: Israeli colonialism at work

Appropriately, it rained. Eretz Israel arrived yesterday at the foot of Jabal Abu Ghneim - Har Homa to its military landlords - with armour, helicopters and an honour guard for the bulldozers. Some honour: this building work is an act of colonialism by the Israeli government, timed to pay off the political debts of the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. These flats do not need to be built. They do not need to be built on a Palestinian hillside. And they do not need to be built now.

If there is no violent outbreak this week, that will be a blessing for the prospect for Middle East peace (defined minimally as the absence of bloodshed) is bleaker than for some time. It is indeed time for the friends of Israel to clarify the extent and the nature of our friendship. We say: for the existence of the Israeli state within secure boundaries and with a right to defend itself internally and externally against terrorism - yes. But for a policy of tinpot imperialism, contemptuous of legal process and blinkered in its refusal to see that the Palestinian national entity exists and will have to be recognised - no.

The more earth is moved and concrete laid, the greater the puzzle grows over the Netanyahu government's long-term intentions. Evidently, he has no use for Yasser Arafat and the prospect of a Palestinian state that he embodies. Some

of Netanyahu's coalition henchmen talk openly about assassinating the Palestinian leader. But what sort of calculation can be behind that threat?

Construction work at Har Homa is only going ahead because Arafat is weak. He has no leverage over the Israeli government, but few other buttons to push. He is capable of inciting insurrection, but mayhem on the streets could be dangerous to his position and the rule of the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli government, at one and the same time, wants to hold Arafat responsible while denying him the support that would make his responsibility operational. Does Netanyahu have some alternative Palestinian leader up his sleeve? Does he really think that anarchy - which would surely follow Arafat's disappearance - is going to make colonial government any easier?

Or does he, perhaps, have some unannounced model in which the Palestinians simply disappear? The saga of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries - to be chopped, changed and gerrymandered at whim - has lately shown how unwelcome the Netanyahu coalition finds the idea of assimilation. Too often it seems as if he and his even less attractive coalition partners dream of the West Bank, even those densely populated Arab suburbs of Old Jerusalem, as *terra nullius*, their inhabitants a tribe of ghosts to be wished away, decimated... exterminated?

That is a loaded word. But suppose, for the sake of argument, the Palestinian population were to turn overnight into peace-loving and harmless folk: Israel would still be overturning their legal claims to place and property. Because he has nowhere else to go, Arafat may be persuaded to swallow Har Homa and continue talking, *fait accompli*. During his visit last week, King Hussein hinted at trade-offs: an airport for Gaza, release of prisoners, better connections between the autonomously administered West Bank areas and Gaza. Formally, these are, of course, points contained within the existing

Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement: from the Palestinian point of view, Israel is already committed, and cannot brandish them as a sweetener. But, a brighter light in a dark landscape, King Hussein may have a continuing role to play as honest broker. In the aftermath of the revolting killing of Israeli girls in the Jordan Valley, his demeanour impressed all sides. So, too, did the Israeli response. Surely there was a lesson in those dealings after the deaths - that inter-state relationships can survive, perhaps be strengthened, by cool heads after the actions of the maddened and the maniac. Does not

that, too, point towards the basic need for Israel to aid the creation of a Palestinian state?

Recently Arafat was in Washington DC. His visit came within days of Netanyahu's arrival in Moscow. How the world has turned since the days when Middle East relationships could be mapped on a Cold War grid. But the United States still stands alone as friend of the Israeli government, as it did when the United Nations voted on Har Homa. There are reasons for that kind of vote, above and beyond domestic US political affiliations... it would be impermissibly naive to exonerate UN General Assembly discussions from the taint of hypocrisy and all manner of fellow travelling.

Non-action at the UN would matter a lot less if, in other forums, the United States were pushing the Netanyahu government in the right direction. But since the exertions of President Clinton's special envoy Dennis Ross, which led to the Israeli decision to stick with the withdrawal from the centre of Hebron, inertia seems to have set in. It is nearly 11 months since Netanyahu took office. Like many passionate philo-Semites, this newspaper shuddered a little when he arrived. We fear we were right. He is embroiled in allegations of personal corruption; his political position often seems to consist of little more than continuous and unnecessary concessions to a right

wing which needs him more than vice versa. He hangs on. Now Israel's friends must hope that the parliamentary hold of the coalition weakens further, and in subsequent elections Israeli voters are given the chance to think again. A national coalition involving Labour would necessarily seek to revive the pathway opened by the Oslo Accords, based on withdrawal from the West Bank. This commitment leads towards a safer future. The construction work at Har Homa destroys it.

Ken Clarke's bad hair day

Our world has been shaken. Our deepest political convictions have been rocked. The election has barely started and yet this newspaper is gasping with shock, trembling on a shaken planet. Kenneth Clarke, whom we support as an honest man, a bad dresser and a good egg has been seen in the Commons with strange hair. A cursory glance suggests it has been blow-dried. Loath though we are even to discuss the matter in a family paper, there are those who think it has been, well, dyed.

Ken, say it isn't true. Voters need some unchanging truths to hold on to. And the Chancellor's wholly admirable sloppiness is one of them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Schools plight shows tax cut hypocrisy

Sir: Now that the Prime Minister has finally confirmed 1 May as the date for the general election, we will hear many assurances from the Conservative and Labour parties about their commitment to education.

I have just received my statement of council tax due next year. This was accompanied by a leaflet setting out the spending plans of the council. This revealed that the council is planning a cut in the education budget.

Apparently, the reason is that the amount of grant the council receives from central government has been cut following the 1p reduction in the basic rate of income tax announced in the Budget. Despite an increase in the rate of council tax, the county council has had to cut services across the board, including education.

Before Conservatives start muttering about loony left councils, they should register that I live in Buckinghamshire, the last county council still controlled by the Conservatives. Before Labour supporters start getting strong, they should realise that this state of affairs has been caused by an income tax cut that they fully support.

While I am now too cynical to expect the electorate to wake up and vote for the only party that has made a real commitment to Britain's future with its pledges on education, I can only hope that the Conservative and Labour parties stop sounding off about their supposed commitment to education and admit that they are only interested in trying to buy our votes.

BILL COLLETT
Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire

Sir: I choose to pay high taxes. Why? I value the freedom my four-year-old son has to play in complete safety. I value being able to walk down the streets without feeling guilty at seeing the homeless and the poor.

I value being able to walk my front door unlocked, to leave without fear along the street at night, to know that when my son starts school he will be in a class of less than 30 with two, maybe three teachers. I find the money paid in taxes a very small price to pay for such a quality of life.

The country I now choose to live in? Sweden.

Perhaps, with all the election promises of low tax bills, it is useful to remember what the choice could be. Quality of life, or a little more money to survive the difficulties with?

FELICITY LING
Luleå, Sweden

Sir: Now that the general election has finally been called, we will be subjected in the usual barrage of tedious party political electioneering over the next six-and-a-half weeks. I suggest an alternative to our current method of parliamentary election, which leads to short-term, cyclical five-year policies, and cynical manipulation of the economy in the run-up to a general election.

By staggering the election of every member of parliament to weekly intervals it is possible to be continuously electing the current government, with the term of office dictated only by party majority.

By having, say, three by-elections every week we would have the equivalent of a general election every four years (assuming 651



Small abattoirs less frightening

Sir: Rulings from Brussels on the slaughter of food animals ("Abattoir animals deserve better", letter, 17 March) were too vigorously enforced in our country by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, forcing small abattoirs out of business.

Animals are now sent on much longer journeys to very noisy, rapid-production, less caring, huge EU-approved abattoirs. No wonder the poor creatures are scared, and all supposedly in the name of improved hygiene standards.

Not only has this government caused a lot of extra, unnecessary stress for animals going to slaughter, it has also caused a lot of stress for owners of small abattoirs and their now redundant workers.

BRENDA BUCK
Leeds

Sir: Frances Hardwick may be interested to know that there is a mobile abattoir working on my farm at present. It is available to travel to the animals, rather than transporting them miles and miles in filth and stress to some huge factory.

PAUL LYSLEY
Castle Combe, Wiltshire

Liverpool faces up to harsh facts

Sir: On the day after the latest Liverpoolian received a knighthood, Evelyn Ross (letter, 13 March) castigates Paul Valley for allowing Liverpoolians to "enjoy and promote their cosy self-image of brave loser and victim" in his perceptive article "Hidden virtues of loser-friendly Liverpool" (11 March).

Paul Valley's article was about how the city has survived in the face of adversity. I witness this every day of my life in the school and university where I teach, and among audiences I perform to as a musician. It is, I assure you, a city which very much has had to face the "harsh realities of modern life".

GERALD MURPHY
Liverpool

Sir: Evelyn Ross (letter, 13 March) is entitled to her opinion, but to say of Liverpool, "Heaven help anyone who is neither Catholic nor working class" is insulting and wrong. We are Irish Catholic and working class. And proud of it.

JAMES KENNEDY
Liverpool

Dap that!

Sir: As an expat Cardiffian I am enjoying your correspondence on Welsh dialects. I only differ from R Pugh (18 March) in that in our household "to dap down" was to place an item anywhere, *pro tem*.

The meaning of "dap" as a plimsoll reminds me of a childish joke, circa 1950, which we thought screamingly funny.

Question: What's the fastest thing in the world?

Answer: Diarrhoea with daps on. Boom-boom.

LINDA RYMON
Monkton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire

Sir: The word "dap" (letter, 18 March) was well known to schoolboys in Bath, Somerset, during the Second World War. You got the dap on your rear end if you forgot to bring your gas mask to school.

JOHN GORDON
Ripon, North Yorkshire

seats), but without the wasteful hype, advertising and economic manipulation that our current election system induces. The Commons majority of a given party could be reviewed monthly.

This mechanism would provide ongoing feedback to the governing party of the nation's opinion of its performance, and allow government to look to the long-term benefit of the country.

CLIVE SKINNER
Bristol

Sir: By 6.15 this evening [Monday] I had had enough of the election coverage. Is this a record?

Dr MICHAEL HOWARTH
London SW79

Train ban on breast-feeding

Sir: Recently, travelling on the Rugby-to-London InterCity train, since taken over by Virgin West Coast, I discreetly began breast-feeding my crying, hungry baby.

I was immediately approached by a member of British Rail staff and told that either I stopped, or I would be put off the train at the next stop. When I protested that the baby was hungry, I was told that breast-feeding was upsetting the other passengers in the carriage.

I felt intimidated and humiliated by the ticket collector. Most multiple stores in this country have recognised the needs of mothers and babies, and have in place policies which allow them to breast-feed in public and private areas.

Mrs H JOHNSON
Orpington, Kent

Why doctors are so stressed

Sir: W Alexander (letter, 17 March) has identified one pertinent aspect of the incipient NHS medical manpower crisis. At the bottom of all this is the fact that the old-style NHS medical staffing structure is no longer sustainable.

Even in the 15 years since I qualified, technical advances and rightly raised patient expectations mean that even a well-trained house officer or senior house officer cannot possibly manage medical and surgical emergencies until the consultant makes his ward round.

Many other factors, in particular the consequent intensity of work, have driven all doctors to move towards sustainable patterns of working. It is becoming rarer for consultants in hard-pressed specialties to do whole series of days on call and GPs have been forced to resort to out-of-hours centres etc.

As Paddy Ashdown has pointed out in relation to education, if the people want quality services they will have to pay for them. Health care is no exception.

Dr EVAN A BAYTON
Senior Registrar in Accident and Emergency Medicine
Warrington Hospital NHS Trust

Sir: A paper in the *British Medical Journal* recently pointed out that it is desirable that emergency care is not delivered by doctors who are chronically short of sleep. I hope

this is not controversial.

It is desirable that trained specialists provide as high a proportion of medical care in hospital as can be arranged. Training doctors well takes less time than training them badly. Once well trained, they can work as autonomous specialists.

One of the perverse incentives of the past was that it was cheaper to load duties on to junior doctors than to employ other people to do them. This is now vanishing, and medical training and patient care are improving as a result.

The massive expansion of the hospital management structure, dealing almost solely with the alleged internal market, is also funded out of the total NHS coffers. It is a better target for redistribution than the changes in medical staffing and training which are necessary to respond to changes in society and medicine.

Dr ADRIAN MIDDLETON
Chairman, Exeter Division
British Medical Association
Exeter

Cancel bypass

Sir: Steven Norris, until recently a junior minister in the Department of Transport, has admitted that the Newbury bypass was a mistake. Only a small part of the cost, originally estimated at £100m but certain to be far more than that, has so far been spent. No irreparable damage has yet been done. This scheme should be cancelled.

STEPHEN FLOWDEN
London NW1

Ministers back good buildings

Sir: I do think Jonathan Glancey, in his article "Parliamentary interest in building? Never!" (7 March) is unfair in ignoring the Government's efforts to improve standards of architecture, particularly in the public sector.

His reference to the recent debate in the House of Commons includes not a single word of the Government's contribution. Iain Sproat, replying for the Government, affirmed our commitment to raising architectural standards. He recognised successes and failures, identified problems and made suggestions for addressing them.

Virginia Bottomley and I have had a number of discussions with leading architects, as well as with our colleagues in government, to consider how we can improve the quality of our buildings. John Gummer's enthusiasm has been evident in his initiative "Quality in Town and Country".

The Department of National Heritage/Department of the Environment advice on promoting and organising architectural competitions has been warmly welcomed. Competitions have become more popular and are taking on new importance to meet the great requirement for new buildings being driven by the National Lottery.

A number of options for a National Centre for Architecture and what role it might play are

examined in a report we commissioned and are circulating. The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, a Private Finance Initiative project supported by this department, has received accolades. Later this year we shall publish guidance to ensure that PFI takes good architecture into account.

As Jonathan Glancey says, architecture frames most of our lives for much of the time. Neither public nor private developers always get it right. But to ignore the efforts we are making to encourage good architecture does no service to the cause of bettering architecture and design in Britain, which we are both anxious to promote.

Lord INGLEWOOD
Under-Secretary of State
Department of National Heritage
London SW1

Spice wrack

Sir: Two resounding Bronx cheers to Peter Popham ("The teenies vote for snog 'n' run", 12 March). The Toys recorded "A Lover's Concerto", not "Symphony for Love". Far worse, how could he trace the history of girl groups without even mentioning the Shangri-las? Mistresses of teen angst, they are without rival as the greatest girl group in pop history and would chew up and spit out Geri Halliwell and Co before breakfast. Any two lines from "Give Him a Great Big Kiss" could blow the entire Spice canon out of the water. "When I say I'm in love, you best believe I'm in Love - L-U-V-I"

GUY PIERCE
London SE25

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analysis

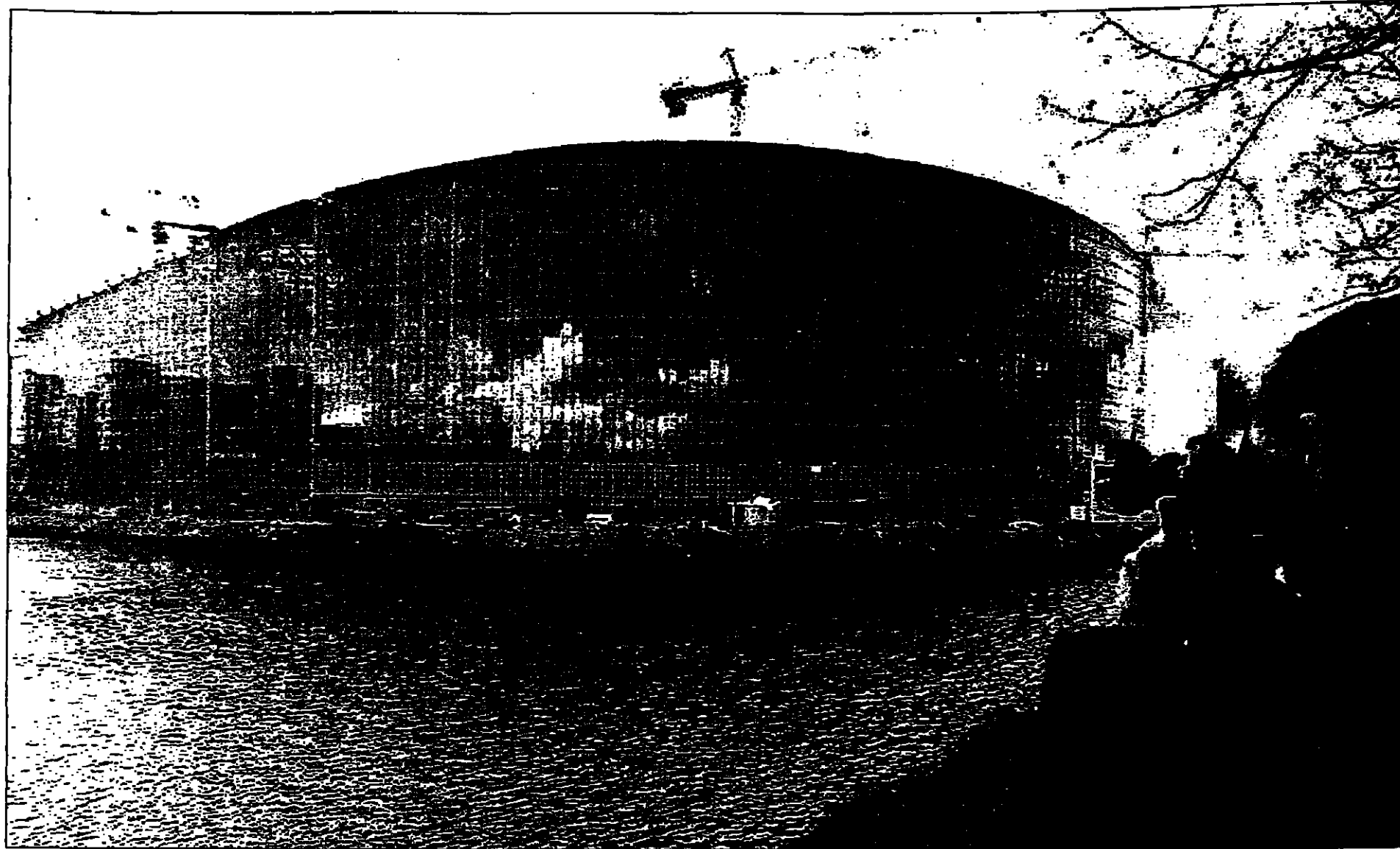
The citizens of Europe should be happy that a man of Bryan Cassidy's calibre is representing their democratic interests. At least, that's what Mr Cassidy thinks. Member of the European Parliament for Dorset and East Devon, he believes that, in return for all his hard work, Europe owes him a good living. Mr Cassidy is currently insisting that the taxpayer should give him £315, the cost of one day's pheasant shooting, which he "sacrificed" in order to travel to Belarus as an EU election monitor. "Of course I should be reimbursed," he splutters indignantly over a whisky, after a day stomping the corridors of the Strasbourg Palais. "Of course you should," says his colleague, Edward McMillan-Scott (North Yorkshire, Con). "You know what the Dutch are saying about you, Bryan... That you've been shooting pheasants."

"I was pressed to Belarus at the very last minute," continues Mr Cassidy. "And bloody cold and miserable it was, too. You would have asked for your money back if you'd had to cancel a holiday due to work. Cheeks pinkening, Mr Cassidy (ex-Army, ex-publishing-exec) doesn't pause for long to worry about what his constituents would think about his attitude. The MEP's "subsistence allowance" of £180 a day is barely enough "for two" (his wife, Gillian, is his assistant) to enjoy a meal at La Maison du Cygne, he says, citing the most expensive restaurant in Brussels.

"I don't see why we should have anything but the best. I don't care what the majority of my constituents can afford. I compare myself to people earning salaries of seven figures," he explains. Anyway, the Belarus election was "fixed", says the MEP who scraped into his seat with a 2,000 majority after a 38 per cent turn out, so he should know all about democracy.

Mr Cassidy only has to glance out of the window to see pillars of European democracy being erected all around him. Here, twinkling in the evening light, the parliament's brand-new Strasbourg Palais is taking shape, at a cost of £330m. Meanwhile, in Brussels, another parliament building is also nearing completion, at a cost of nearer £60m. The total cost to the taxpayer is about £1bn.

At the EU's Amsterdam summit in June, member states will decide to pool more powers in several crucial areas. In 1999 economic and monetary union is scheduled to start, the



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY LAWRENCE

Q: What could this building in Strasbourg be?

A: Another pleasure palace for our MEPs

by Sarah Helm in Strasbourg

single largest act of European integration since the founding of the union. And early in the next millennium, enlargement to bring in Europe's eastern neighbours will begin. Given these events, Europe's leadership is under stronger pressure than ever to win the support of its citizens, to counter spreading Euro-scepticism, and to prove that the union is accountable to its citizens through a credible parliament.

To watch the cranes lurching through the sky above Brussels and Strasbourg one might think that Europe was responding to these challenges by building representative government on a grand scale. The truth is, how-

ever, that new buildings only highlight the impotence of the institution. The shimmering masses on the Brussels and Strasbourg skylines just symbolise the waste caused as MEPs try to lay a claim to power by building facts on the ground on a breathtaking scale.

The credibility of the parliament has always been undermined by treaty requirements, which have obliged it to operate from three centres. Under a deal carved up by member states, the parliament's plenary meetings must be held in Strasbourg, a city on the Franco-German border which the French, in particular, insist has everlasting symbolic value. The

administration is in Luxembourg, while most ordinary parliamentary business is carried out in Brussels.

Many believe that dismembering the parliament is a deliberate ploy by member states to prevent the institution gaining real clout - clout that could lead to creating a truly federal body that would undermine the authority of national parliaments. Over the years member states have reluctantly allowed the parliament to amend some EU legislation. But MEPs' ability to influence important policy moves is virtually nil.

For its part, the parliament has long understood that if it wants to acquire real power and influence it must extract itself from Strasbourg and build a permanent base in Brussels, alongside the other EU institutions. To this end, the body assigned itself the funds to sign a 27-year lease on a parliament complex in Brussels, which is now nearing completion.

The building was designed as a conference centre and is in many ways unsuitable as a parliament. The Brussels regional authority is reeling at the traffic implications of the new building and is refusing to allow the parliament's demand of 2,300 car parking places, saying the limit is 900. The parliament

says it wants to be "closer to the citizens" but blight around the Brussels edifice shows that citizens are moving away en masse. Nevertheless, MEPs remain committed to their Brussels home, despite the fact that every month they must up sticks and travel down to Strasbourg for their plenary. The parliament's 3,400 administrative staff join the monthly travelling circus and head to the Strasbourg session too. Because

the existing Strasbourg building is expected to be too small for meetings after enlargement, the parliament is building itself a second brand-new palace here too.

As MEPs gathered for last week's Strasbourg session, fog was causing chaos at airports and Strasbourg City Council (keen as ever to keep the money-spinning institution) sent out fleets of chauffeur-driven cars to meet MEPs diverted to fog-free airports.

"Let's see, I left home at 9am and flew from Stansted to Amsterdam and then on to Stuttgart where I had to get a car," says Robert Sturdy, member for Cambridgeshire. "The car was late and I finally got here at 6pm."

By midday on Tuesday, the circus transfer was almost complete. Trunks carrying papers and equipment down from Brussels were unpacked and dumped outside members' offices in Strasbourg, as corridors took on the appearance of a boarding school at the beginning of term. Outside a Belgian national front MEP stood before a TV camera arguing for repatriation of all immigrants, while inside the chamber, banks of interpreters were interpreting a contribution from Ken Collins (Strathclyde East) to the

effect that Dolly was a "very happy sheep".

Whether any of the week's proceedings would appear in the newspapers was unclear. Since the parliament's move to Strasbourg, journalists have lost interest. "Dolly, dolly, who wants the Dolly vote?" cried a press officer across the virtually real press room.

There are CD-Roms on the IGC and video clips on MEPs. More than 110 permanent staff are employed keeping journalists informed of every development. Meanwhile, technicians are transmitting to Europe by satellite. Is anyone watching?

Journalists enjoyed the "sign on and sod off" story, but word is that the parliament's inquiry into expenses will be a white-wash. With salary and allowances, a British member can expect to take home about £70,000 net - about £100,000 net if he or she puts a family member on the payroll, as Mr Cassidy does.

MEPs (whose register of interests is voluntary) earn unspecified additional sums as advisers to outside bodies. Mr Cassidy, who painstakingly declares his numerous interests, represents Union Carbide (which gave us Bhopal) and also trains lobbyists on how to lobby

MEPs like himself. "I see training lobbyists as part of my job," he asserts proudly.

The rumpus on Wednesday did capture some media attention. Leaders of the 3,100 Belgian car workers, sacked by Renault, had come to hear how MEPs planned to back their case and reaffirm the "European social model".

"Next thing is, we'll have bikes in jackboots with tommy-guns up there in the gallery," said Roy Perry, the Tory MEP. As the workers passed through the foyer a choir of Greek clerics struck up a Gregorian chant.

"The chairman is a Communist," added Mr Perry, as if to insult Antoni Gutierrez Diaz, a Spanish post-Communist, who bears the scars of Franco's torturers on his neck. "We cannot open up the parliament like this - the next thing is we'll have them abseiling down into the chamber or marauding into the parliament building - it'll be just like Albania. It'll be mob rule," said the British MEP, as TV monitors all over the building showed gangs of Renault workers marauding around the parliament building, declaring: "Capitalist Europe. Parliament for the rich."

"Don't be too hard on us," says Alan Donnelly, member for Tyne and Wear. "It is demoralising for those trying to do good work to read how ridiculous this place is in the press." Many MEPs assiduously scrutinise EU legislation and 1,000 parliamentary amendments have found their way on to the statute books. The parliament has achieved much in the field of emission standards, car crash safety and technical standards for lift harmonisation to aid the handicapped. "I would put my main achievement as... lettuces," says Robert Sturdy. Otto Von Habsburg, an MEP from Bavaria, and son of the last Habsburg emperor, points out that the parliament is as yet "young" - the empire of his forebears evolved over 600 years.

Even the carryings-on of men such as Bryan Cassidy could, perhaps, be viewed as somewhat trivial. During the Renault protest Mr Cassidy was seen by Labour MEPs gesturing to the public gallery "in an obscene, threatening and provocative manner in the international language of get stuffed". But one might find such behaviour in Westminster, too.

It is the member states, rather than the parliament, that should be blamed for allowing the erection of two such massive white elephants. Britain complains of Euro "waste" more forcefully than any country, but it has never called for a permanent parliamentary home. If Europe's leaders were to give the European Parliament real power, they and the citizens might find that MEPs behaved with real discipline. Yet there is no sign that member states will throw anything other than scraps of new powers to the parliament at the summit in Amsterdam. Governments which stand paralysed before the "democratic deficit" should recall that rot can eventually bring whole palaces tumbling down.

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Away from the election, a breath of fresh air

Our pledge: This column is guaranteed absolutely free from any mention of the general election. Except just then, of course. Thank you.

Today we bring you a story for our times, a tale of personal values, of care for hygiene and yet of ultimately hopeless insecurity. It is post-modernist yet timeless, antique yet timely...

A reader writes: Oh, for heaven's sake - get on with it! Fair enough. Here we go then with a short story entitled "Bad Breath Blues".

It was rather odd that Bill Blunkett worried about having bad breath, as he had taken so many other precautions about his personal hygiene. He had eliminated dandruff from his head and shoulders, he had made sure that nasal hair was trimmed with military precision, and he had even mastered the golden rule of after-shave lotion.

The golden rule of after-shave lotion, if you are interested, is that putting too much on is worse than putting none on, and that if all those men who go round

smelling like an explosion in a perfume factory realised how they spread asphyxiation, the after-shave lotion industry would plummet.

But still Bill Blunkett worried that he might have bad breath.

This was because he had once read that you can never smell your own breath, in the same way that you can never hear your own snoring or see yourself from behind. You are so used to your own smell that it cannot impinge on you, and therefore everyone who has bad breath thinks he has acceptable breath.

The same is true of people who have acceptable breath. So you never know if you have bad breath or not.

Bill Blunkett sometimes tried breathing into his own cupped hand and then sniffing quickly to see if he could catch the odour of his own respiration. It was useless. All he could smell was the warm, slightly sweaty smell of his own hand. This was all done in strict privacy, of course, as indeed was the experiment when he breathed into a



Miles Kington

paper bag and sealed it up, then later had a sniff.

Which is what you would expect if you had bad breath to which you were already accustomed.

It drove Bill Blunkett barmy.

There was nobody he could ask. He had a wife and two children, of course, and several score colleagues, but they were precisely the people who would have to put up with his bad breath (if he had it) and who could not

be trusted to give an honest or unambiguous answer.

He could see the dialogue in advance.

Her: "Darling, do I ever have bad breath?"

Her: "No, not really. Except when you have been drinking, or eating, or smoking, or chewing gum."

Or perhaps more like this...

Her: "Darling do I ever have bad breath?"

Her: "Never mind about that - have you booked the car in for its service yet?"

There are some things you can never consult intimate friends and relations about - such things as sexual problems, table manners, the technique of tying a bow-tie, simple spellings, and how to drive better, and bad breath is one of these. Far better to consult a complete stranger.

And that is exactly what Bill Blunkett did.

With a courage he hardly knew he possessed, he one day leant forward on the train to a tall strange man who was about to get out at the next stop (Leeds) and said, "May I ask you a favour? Does my breath smell?" and breathed over him.

"Not specially," said the man, and got out.

The quality of Bill Blunkett's life soared after that. He had it on him, an unimpeachable, unbiased authority that his breath was OK! A completely impartial arbiter had told him that halitosis was not a danger!

You should have seen his social poise increase and his courage at parties and dinners take him through previously uncharted waters.

It even affected his work, in that his increased confidence gave him a more dynamic attitude and he soon won promotion, and was relocated to a senior position in Yorkshire.

The first day he encountered his new boss, he thought he recognised him. So did his new boss.

"My God," said his new boss, without thinking, "It's the man on the train with the horrible breath!"

It was at this point that Bill Blunkett's life took a decided downturn again.

Not a pretty story, I'm afraid, but it took your mind off the election for five minutes, didn't it?

It is hard to play by the rules when there are none left

Tony Blair invoked the word, trust, yesterday, seeking to place trust at the core of the election campaign. He is right, of course, because politicians rank alongside, ahem, journalists at the bottom of the trust league. That perception of politicians is corrosive to democracy, and anything that can counter it must be helpful.

But the issue is bigger than just hoping that politicians seeking election will do what they say. It is about public service in general as well as politics, for remember that the government is a thin crust of a few score politicians atop a mountain of public servants. And it is not just about the narrow, if enormously important, issue of trust; it is also about the wider one of ethics, the E-word, the behavioural standard of governments.

Of course for all the talk of "sleaze" Britain is by no means alone in its worries. Concerns about possible falling ethical standards are surfacing throughout the developed world. They are evident in the US, throughout continental Europe, and certainly in Japan. Hardly a day goes by without some prominent person somewhere in the world being forced to resign because of some ethical short-fall. If they themselves have not done anything wrong, they are forced to resign because of the failings of some of their staff. And if they don't resign, the opprobrium is even greater: the fact that so many Tory ministers have tried to cling on has heightened our perception that they are a sleazy bunch. Wait a couple of years after the election and the new lot will be busy resigning too. Why?

This is not a people problem. People are people. While there will always be wrong 'uns in every walk of life there is no evidence that they are more now than they used to be. It is a system problem, for we are all asking new and different things of government.

A group at the OECD in Paris has been studying the problem and has produced some guidelines on how to manage government ethics. Any new and inexperienced government would be well advised to read them.

The core of the OECD argument is that the business of government has changed radically over the past few years. It used to be administration of a set of pre-established rules. Provided the rules were followed, public servants were free from attack; for they had done what they had been told to do: the Sir Humphrey school of management. But that system created obvious inefficiencies, and people became fed up with a public sector that was unresponsive to their needs. So "keep your nose clean" was replaced by "show some initiative". A series of private sector disciplines were incorporated requiring people in government services to respond to what customers wanted.

The trouble is, if you ask people to show initiative they will make mistakes. Indeed making mistakes is part of the learning process that the private sector goes through in seeking



Hamish McRae

This is a system problem. We are all asking different things of government

to develop and adapt service to public demands. If you don't sometimes fail, you are not trying anything new. I have always liked the story about a rising young executive in a US manufacturing company who was in charge of putting in a new \$8m computer system. It was a disaster and the whole cost had to be written off. He padded in to the chief executive and offered to resign.

"Absolutely not," said his boss. "We have just spent \$8m putting you through an extremely expensive management training course on computer installation and we certainly don't want you taking that expertise off to a competitor. You stay here and make sure that we never make that sort of mistake again."

You see the point. The public service ethos is completely different. A minister whose department screws up has first to try to pretend that (so to speak) the beef burgers are perfectly all right; and then when they aren't, leave it to some other poor so-and-so to carry the can five years later.

As the OECD points out, it is in the area of ethics that the tensions are most evident between the old rule-book approach to public administration and the new innovative, risk-taking one.

"If there is too much control," it points out, "nothing will get done; but if there is too little control the wrong things will get done."

So there has to be a trade-off between a system which adds administrative cost by "trying to catch every misdeed, minor misdemeanour or actual corruption, versus the political costs of allowing some mistakes to occur."

So what do you do? The OECD public management group has drawn up an "ethics infrastructure" to try to promote ethical public behaviour. Key elements are:

- Political commitment: politicians saying they are important and setting an example.
- Legal framework: laws that set standards and enforce them.

- Accountability: audits, performance evaluation, codes of conduct, statements of values, roles, obligations.
- Education and training: supportive public service conditions; decent pay and security.

- Ethics co-ordination: to make sure similar standards of conduct apply across the board.
- Civic society: a culture which acts as a watchdog over government activities.

All this may sound self-evident – no one is going to say that it is a bad thing to have accountability for people in public service – but the fact that it needs to be said itself speaks volumes. Voters clearly do not trust governments, or politicians like Tony Blair would not bang that to the top of their agendas. It is interesting that political commitment is number one on the OECD list. But saying that is the easy bit. The hard bit comes when a government makes a mistake. Does it admit it and learn from it? Are we mature enough to accept and respect that honesty? Or will we just carry on jeering while they bluster?

The Scotsman's home rule hand-grenade

by Andrew Marr

The Sun is not the only paper to have made news by changing course in the opening days of the election campaign. The Scotsman has just lobbed a small hand-grenade into the Labour establishment by arguing that for home rule to work, Scottish MPs must now lose the right to vote on English affairs at Westminster.

The Scotsman is to middle-class Labour in Scotland what The Sun has been to blue-collar southern Toryism. It has been more sophisticated, more veiled, but scarcely less dependable. Its gloriously turreted and gold-leafed Edinburgh offices have been the bastion, the unshakable citadel, of leftish Scottish home rule. (I know, I carried a spear there once.) So this questioning of the orthodoxy from deep inside the belly of the temple is, at the very least, an occasion for pursed lips and muttered tsks.

The Scotsman's rudery comes at an interesting moment. It says it requires an answer, in the name of honesty and fair play, to the "West Lothian Question" – in other words, once power has been devolved to a Scottish or Welsh assembly, why should the English tolerate Celtic involvement in their domestic affairs?

The Question, almost Arthurian in its significance, was named after the West Lothian MP, Tam Dalyell, who asked it persistently in the House of Commons in the late Seventies. But it is the oldest Unionist question of all, which came first from people like the Tory leader Arthur Balfour, who put it thus in 1914: "Are you going to leave the whole of these 72 Scottish MPs here to manage English education... it is an irresponsible scheme!"

The Question's value, from Balfour to Dalyell to John Major, has been that it seemed to put a Unionist block on self-government inside the UK for the Scots or Welsh. (The Irish have always been treated differently, largely because of their enthusiasm for seining and high explosives.)

Why? Because if the Celts do retire from English business, then the whole jolly crashes. Westminster would then be, at some stage, to find itself trying to support two different administrations at the same time. There would be the Scottish-backed, probably Labour, government with a majority for European affairs, defence, fiscal policy and so on. Then there would be the Eng-



The paper's stance is a painful kick up the Scottish leftish establishment's fundamental principle from a once dependable ally

lish, probably Tory, administration which controls health, education and much else south of the border.

This administrative schizophrenia would not last long. You cannot have two cabinets, two leaders. One would have to dominate. Though the Liberal Democrats have always advocated a federal Britain, with an English Assembly to match Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, that seems a Utopian answer. So, if the Question was asked, and then logically answered, it has always been assumed that the UK would crack, groan and then split apart.

Which is, of course, unthinkable. Unionists have therefore used the innocent-seeming

Question as a subtle threat. Decoded, it reads: "You know Scottish or Welsh devolution would annoy the English, who are numerous, rich and powerful. So you must back off."

End of home rule/jocks back in their box? Not necessarily. There are other answers. It is not clear that the English would in fact be outraged by Scottish self-government, so long as the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster was cut, to reduce their influence.

David Steel argues, in addition, that an English grand committee should be established at Westminster to deal with English-only matters, just like the similar Scottish and Welsh committees. For those who are keen

on compromise, and retaining the Union, there are compromises readily available.

By contrast, demanding a logical answer to the Question will tend to drive the debate to extremes. Although the Question was framed to protect the Union, it could equally well be used as a jenny to force it apart. The Scotsman's recent editorial begins, for instance, with a passionate plea for home rule: "We contend that the cause is just, the demand manifold, and the case beyond challenge. Democracy withers when a nation with its own legal system is denied the right to make its own laws."

If it thinks that, and understands the dangers of the Ques-

tion, then the paper is well down the path to Scottish independence. Is that what it really wants? Or is this, as appalled Labour devolutionists think, a hurdle which is meant to be too high for Tony Blair to jump – and therefore a way of justifying an anti-devolution conclusion? Everyone knows how dependent even New Labour may be on Scottish votes.

Is The Scotsman, therefore, covertly demanding a choice between the Tories and the SNP? That suspicion is strengthened by the fact that The Scotsman is now owned by the Barclay twins, strong supporters of Margaret Thatcher, and has, in Andrew Neil, an editor-in-chief who is both a Unionist and a paid-up member of the radical right.

By this reckoning, the change of direction may not be quite the agonising kidney-punch which The Sun inflicted on the Prime Minister; but it is a very painful kick up the Scottish leftish establishment's fundamental principle from a once dependable ally.

So – in short – ouch!

How should reformers respond? They certainly shouldn't shy from the Question because of party timidity or because they suspect the motives of the people who ask it. Anyway, there are bolder and more principled answers to give.

If Labour embraced voting reform, then Scotland would be a little more Tory and England would be a little more Labour and Lib Dem. The differences between the historic nations of Britain, which are greatly exaggerated by the first-past-the-post system, would be smoothed over. We would become a Union of political minds, not simply of taxpayers. The UK would become more ideologically similar, and therefore stronger, not weaker. And, of course, it would matter far less to Labour whether it had Scottish MPs to prop it up at Westminster or not.

So I think The Scotsman has done the whole country a service: its fundamental case is that splinters and broken half-paragaphs of reform may not be enough. Scottish home rule without voting reform would leave the Union vulnerable to a surging back of the radical right in England. So if Blair is driven to deliver an Edinburgh parliament, as he has promised to, he cannot flinch back. He will have to go further. Good: like a scavenger dyke, stone by stone, our whole old settlement is slowly slipping over.

Hey buddy, I like rude New Yorkers

David Usborne laments the city's attempts to be more polite

What are they doing to New York? Shootings and muggings are down and I have no argument with that.

The transformation of Times Square from the sleazy but titillating peep-show bazaar to a sanitised Disneyville is almost complete. Now, wait for it, there is a campaign going on to make the natives more polite.

New York without its famously profane mouth would be like a lion without its mane. Of course, the city is not all that it is cracked up to be in the rudeness department. Call me a fibber or blind, but spontaneous displays of kindness and camaraderie among New Yorkers – even to foreigners – is quite the norm. But there is a special bluntness about discourse in this city. And it is part of New York's identity.

Ask somebody for the time and you may be rewarded, as I recently was, with a less than helpful, "Get a watch, buddy". And think twice before attempting to scold a New Yorker (er, excuse me... sorry... would you mind very much) for queue-barging, blocking your view, putting gum under the seat next to yours or whatever it may be. "Huh?" they will fire back. "What's it to you, anyway?"

You hear worse, of course, like when the visiting team scores a home run in a packed Yankee Stadium (**** the Braves, still echoes in my head) or when one New York driver blocks the path of another trying to turn left against the traffic as I witnessed this week on Park Avenue. A flawlessly coiffed woman leaned out from her polished Lexus limousine and screamed: "Get out of the way, you f---ing moron!"

Tourists anxious for a flavour of ruffian New York traditionally have needed to do nothing more than travel around it. A short trip in the hands of a New York cabby might do it. Trying to fathom the bus routes and asking help from a driver is usually good. For a sense of the sheer mania of Manhattan nothing beats the subway at rush hour – especially the No 6 line.

The city's wise fathers, however, have decided that this should not be your experience and have instituted variously doctored programmes designed to make the people you meet "nicer" – as in have-a-nice-day nice. The first to be victimised were the taxi drivers. Admittedly the city was spurred to



act by a rising tide of complaints about abusive and recalcitrant chauffeurs, like the one who dumped a woman rider midway across the Queensboro Bridge after she insisted on her right to be taken across the East River.

To qualify for a licence now the cabbies must be familiar with a city-penned catalogue of 50 helpful and courteous phrases. These tips in verbal etiquette include: "I'm sorry you don't understand. I will try to speak more clearly"; "Please let me take your bags, sir (madam)"; "Thank you for hailing me, sir (madam)"; and "Madam (sir), is there any particular route you would like today?" The drivers, of course, realise that reciting the phrases would prompt most riders to consider them psychotic and run for safety.

Now it is the bus drivers who are in finishing school. There are horror stories here too. A favourite tells of a driver on the uptown second avenue route who recently took umbrage after a woman rider allegedly insulted him. He simply parked the bus at 82nd street and strolled off, leaving the passengers inside. Mayhem ensued as riders alternately yelled at the woman and pleaded

with the driver to resume his seat. Finally, the next bus came along and rescued the disgruntled passengers.

Every driver is now being ordered to attend classes on keeping peace while at the wheel. At a cost of millions of dollars, the transport authority will dispense such nuggets as: "do not swear or call names"; "avoid sarcasm"; and "never shout at or strike a customer". Among some tricky quiz questions we have: "Elderly customers appreciate it when you drive like you are in a hurry, true or false?" To get all New York's drivers through the course will take two to three years.

But wait, what about the users? Disputes are rarely one-sided, but no one would suggest trying to brainwash every New Yorker in the art of nice. Would they? Yup, they would. This week, I found myself part of an experiment in mind-set modification on the infamous No 6 subway line at Grand Central Station. In a programme dubbed "Step Aside, Speed Your Ride", the transport authority is trying to stop New York commuters from boarding every train as if it were the last lifeboat off the Titanic. As each train draws in, conductors invite you to keep outside orange boxes painted on the platform where the train doors will open. The idea is simple: let everyone out and you – and the train – will get going more quickly.

"There are a few people who get kind of angry," one conductor admits. "But most people understand that we are just trying to improve service." In my few minutes observing this exercise, I am shocked to see that almost no one is daring to disobey. Only one man, looking like he is dressed for a day on Wall Street, flatly refuses to leave the box even after gentle physical encouragement.

The old New York – wondrous city of the gruff and ungracious, of the blunt and belligerent – may be disappearing. Hurry and visit before it is too late.

The lusty ways of St Hilda

St Hilda's College, Oxford, is the only place where I've walked into another girl's room to find a Chippendale. And not the type of furniture. Our last all-female college at Oxford University is once again under attack. Next month, the governing body will probably vote to admit male fellows. Whenever this has happened in other female colleges, male students have inevitably followed. St Hilda's undergraduates are outraged. As well they should be.

Before I went to St Hilda's the thought of spending three years in an all-female college did not appeal. But now when I hear the cries of "anachronism", "get into the real world", I say Rubbish. It's pure jealousy. Forget the 11 girls. Every body wants to be a St Hilda's girl. Far from the old image of "girls in pearls", when I was there we were the bad girls, the belles of St Trinians, the Spice Girls of the university. In fact we typified Intelligent Girl Power before Geri had grown into her first trainer bra.

Somerville women had sold out allowing in men, although they were tweedy and dull to start off with (besides having the disadvantage of an old girl in Margaret Thatcher). The other former women's colleges – St Anne's, St Hugh's, Lady Margaret Hall – got swamped by the men they let in and lost their sex appeal. It is left to St Hilda's – or St Thrilla's, to use its alternative name – to stamp women's dominance on the university.

Go to a party. Half the college was there. Write for a student rag. Hildabeasts were running the show. Act, row, you couldn't escape them. In a nice normal mixed college like Lincoln, they all spent three years in the bar

wrestling with knot theory and acce. In St Hilda's we'd written the book, got the doctorate and gone out clubbing.

Lonely women? Hardly. The college exerted a strange influence over the male psyche. Perhaps it was the preponderance of immature public school boys in Oxford but they couldn't cope with 300 women all in one convent-like building overlooking the river. St Hilda's events were characterised by the sheer, sad desperation of men to get invited to them.

Teams of boys in black tie punted down the river in darkness to crash the St Hilda's ball in my first year, crawling under barbed wire and emerging battered and dusty. Rumours abounded that some sad chemists had even gone as far as snorkelling to get in. Undergraduate balls have been banned since.

"I thought I had died and gone to heaven," the sociologist Rosalind Miles says, talking of her experience there in 1960s. Sisters, she is joined by a long list of feisty alumnae. Gillian Shepherd, Barbara Pym, Zeinab Badawi all went on to great things. It wouldn't have been achieved with self-important whingeing Oxford men in the way.

Two years ago during May Day festivities, Jocelyn Witchard jumped naked off Magdalen Bridge into the river and then posed for The Sun. (That was when the college became known as "St Thrilla's".) Ms Witchard said she was striking a blow for feminism and equal opportunities. You can't imagine anyone from boring old Balliol doing as much for the cause.

Glenda Cooper

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Government borrowing on track to hit target

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Government borrowing looks certain to be well within its target this financial year as official figures yesterday showed the strong economy was boosting tax revenues.

The Conservatives will be hoping for more good news on the economy today, with a further big decline in the number of unemployment benefit claimants expected. The one potential embarrassment will be

the publication of the minutes of Kenneth Clarke's February meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England, when the Chancellor is thought to have turned down Bank advice to increase interest rates.

Separately, a survey of nearly 250 executives by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants found that nearly two-thirds thought their businesses should pay more tax if the money were used to increase spending on education. A similar majority said the education

system did not prepare young people adequately for working life. Of the large parties, only the Liberal Democrats have pledged to raise taxes for education spending.

The Government spent £3.6bn more than it received in taxes last month, taking the cumulative public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) to £14.1bn in the first 11 months of the financial year. This compares with the target of £26.4bn set in the last Budget.

Even with the traditional

end-year spending surge in March, this suggests Mr Clarke could achieve a full-year total several billion pounds below his target. He will be helped by proceeds from the sale of the Housing Corporation's loan book this month.

"The Chancellor will be able to present much better figures than he forecast, not that it looks like doing him much good," said Kevin Gardiner, an economist at Morgan Stanley. "You would have to go a long way back to find an incoming

government inheriting such a favourable set of economic circumstances."

Most City analysts think the short-term outlook for government borrowing is on an unsustainable path, with the level of debt relative to the economy having climbed sharply since 1992. This week a paper from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research argued that spending had grown much faster than normal since 1992 given the state of the economy.

It is not until the next recession that it will become apparent that there is an underlying problem with the public finances," said David Mackie,

UK economist at investment bank JP Morgan.

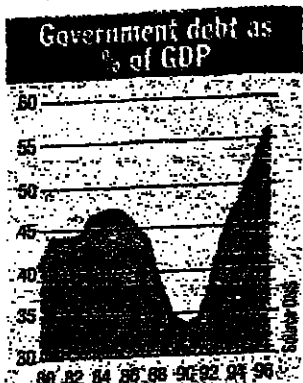
Many experts in the City and elsewhere think government borrowing is on an unsustainable path, with the level of debt relative to the economy having climbed sharply since 1992. This week a paper from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research argued that spending had grown much faster than normal since 1992 given the state of the economy.

Yesterday's figures show expenditure this financial year

running somewhat ahead of the Government's plans. Departmental spending has grown 3 per cent compared with the planned 2.4 per cent.

"The Government is finding it increasingly difficult to keep its own spending in check," said David Bloom at James Capel. Labour has pledged to stick to the Conservative plans if it wins the election.

The financial markets had another attack of the collywobles, with share prices, gilts and the pound all falling yesterday.



Analysts said this was related to international trends. The pound fell by two pence to just over DM2.66 and the FTSE 100 index dropped more than 16 points to 4,356.8.

German merger battle: Unions fear £2.6bn deal instigated by smaller rival Krupp-Hoesch would lead to heavy job cuts

Steel giant Thyssen fights takeover bid

Michael Harrison
London and Imre Karacs
Bonn

The German steelmaker Krupp-Hoesch yesterday launched a hostile £2.6bn bid for its larger rival Thyssen in a move which would create Europe's biggest steelmaker and spark off a fresh round of rationalisation and savage job-cutting.

The combined group would have sales of £24bn and crude steel production of 18.1 million tonnes, making it the third-largest steelmaker in the world and eclipsing British Steel as Europe's number one producer.

But German steel unions fear that the takeover, masterminded by the controversial Krupp-Hoesch chairman, Gerhard Cromme, will merely prove the prelude to heavy job cuts with at least 10,000 of the 110,000-strong Thyssen workforce under threat.

"We will not just sit back and let this happen to us. Basically this is undiluted capitalism, pure Wild West methods," said Willy Siegener, the deputy head of the Thyssen works council. However, other steel makers gave a guarded welcome to news of the bid, suggesting it could ease the continuing problem of overcapacity that has held prices down and wrought so much damage on the European steel industry.

British Steel said: "Anything which could lead to a reduction in capacity in Europe would be fairly positive."

The UK Steel Association also gave cautious backing. Ian Rodgers, its director of policy, said: "Germany has been the one member state where there

is a need for more rationalisation. If the intention of this bid is to help achieve rationalisation then it can only help the situation in Europe generally."

Steelmaking capacity within the European Union is 203 million tonnes compared with actual crude steel production last year of 148 million tonnes. An attempt by the European Commission four years ago to broker a big reduction in capacity in return for approving further state aid for the steel industry resulted in fewer than 10 million tonnes of capacity being removed.

Hostile bids are virtually unheard-of in Germany, making yesterday's move by Krupp-Hoesch, in which the Iranian government has a 25 per cent stake, highly unusual. However,

it is consistent with Mr Cromme's track record. He created Krupp-Hoesch in 1991 by engineering Fried Krupp's hostile takeover of Hoesch with the loss of 30,000 jobs.

Union members from both companies surrounded Krupp-Hoesch's head office in Essen yesterday, shouting to Mr Cromme to address them. Mr Cromme, known in the industry as "the job-killer", hid behind bullet-proof glass and shouted back.

Reports of 30,000 job losses in the steel industry after a takeover of Thyssen were "pure panic-mongering," he told the protesters. There was, he assured them, no plan to close any plants, though the merged company would try to streamline production. The workers re-

sponded at one point by trying to storm the building and then pelting it with eggs.

Krupp-Hoesch is offering DM435 per share, a 25 per cent increase on the final price reached before shares in both companies were suspended in Frankfurt. Thyssen shares jumped to DM410 in unofficial trading after the announcement.

Krupp-Hoesch employs 66,000 people, and in the fiscal year ending 31 December reported a net profit of DM208m on sales of DM24bn. For the fiscal year ending 30 September Thyssen reported a net profit of DM350m on sales of DM38.7bn. It had a market value of just under DM1.2bn before the shares were suspended.

Krupp-Hoesch said the planned merger was in response to intense global competition. In order to stay competitive, German industry had to cut its costs of production, logistics and distribution. "It is indispensable to achieve sufficient size in business in accordance with global standards," Krupp-Hoesch said in a statement. Analysts say that synergies between the two companies in flat steel products and automotive pressings would make the merger attractive and could pave the way for the cost cuts needed to improve Germany's competitiveness against other European steel makers. A tonne of crude steel produced by Thyssen costs DM160, compared with DM155 in France and DM120 by British Steel.

For that reason, the bid is not likely to be opposed by the German authorities, but it will have to be approved by the European Commission.



Under siege: Gerhard Cromme, chairman of Krupp-Hoesch (left), being protected from demonstrators by company security guards holding protective shields outside the steelmaker's headquarters in Essen yesterday
Photograph: AP

RECs hand big price cuts to 5 million customers

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Two of the largest regional electricity companies (RECs), Eastern and Southern, yesterday announced substantial price cuts from April affecting more than 5 million domestic customers.

Eastern, part of the Energy Group which recently demerged from Hanson, is cutting charges by between 6 per cent and 9 per cent, knocking £18-£30 off an average £300 bill. Southern, the only REC which is still independent, is to cut around 7.2 per cent off its charges, reducing average annual bills from £272 to £245.

Both companies confirmed that the entire value of the reductions was the result of regulatory price changes they are obliged to pass on, or from the cut in the fossil fuel levy, a "tax" which subsidises nuclear power and other non-fossil fuels.

Southern had already reduced bills by 4 per cent last summer to take into account the cut in the levy. Eastern said about half of its price cut was the result of the levy reduction. The rest of the cuts come from lower National Grid transmission charges - the result of a tough new price regime starting next month - and the impact of the current distribution price cap which accounts for the bulk of the RECs' charges. This year Eastern must reduce its distribution charges by 2 percentage points below inflation.

Eastern is also introducing new pricing packages, including a tariff which offers a lower rate per unit if households spend more than £225 a year. Prepayment meter customers will also see the £25 surcharge Eastern makes for the service spread across the other charges. Another innovation is a "green" tariff, to be offered later this year, where customers could buy power generated mainly from renewable energy sources.

Roy Thompson, spokesman for the Eastern Regional Consumers' Committee, was sceptical about Eastern's announcement. He said: "They haven't done anything they didn't have to do, put it that way. We also would have preferred Eastern to have abolished the prepayment meter surcharge altogether."

Separately yesterday, the Electricity Consumers' Committee (ECC), the main electricity consumer group, agreed to take up a seat on the executive committee of the Electricity Pool, the controversial body which sets wholesale power prices. The move comes after a row between the two sides over lack of consumer representation in pool affairs.

Yvonne Constance, ECC chairman, said she would "refuse to be bound by any confidentiality agreements in the pool".

Second warning sends DK shares crashing

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Shares in Dorling Kindersley crashed to a three-year low yesterday after the illustrated book and CD-ROM publisher warned that the strong pound, trading problems in America and an accounting change would hit profits in the year to June. It was the company's second warning in three months and yesterday's 51p fall to 27p means the former go-go stock has more than halved in value over the past year.

Since the shares peaked at 64.5p last May, more than £260m has been wiped from DK's market capitalisation, reducing the value of the stake held by founder Peter Kindersley's family by almost £100m. He remained defiantly positive yesterday, insisting the problems facing the company were one-off blips.

Analysts reacted less sanguinely to news that, despite a 9 per cent rise in half-year profits to £6.78m, the full-year result would lag last year's £17.4m. One broker slashed his forecast from £18m to £10m.

The company blamed an upheaval in the American book-selling industry for trading problems in a market which now accounts for 41 per cent of group turnover. Large chains such as Barnes & Noble had reined in the rapid growth of recent years. Mr Kindersley said, and reduced stock in a bid to counter mounting losses.

The soaring pound is also causing problems, with 70 per cent of DK's sales made overseas, although it had warned the City of the threat last December. More unexpected was the announcement that software development costs, which were

amortised over the life of DK's increasingly important CD-ROM products, would be written off as incurred. That reduced half-year profits by £1.6m.

To counter the problems in its retail sales channels, Mr Kindersley said DK would accelerate the expansion of its direct sales operation. Dorling Kindersley Family Learning, which employs around 20,000 consultants to sell books and CD-ROMs straight to homes and schools.

A target of 50 per cent of sales by 2000 has been set, up from 15 per cent currently, and operations in Australia and Russia have been launched.

Mr Kindersley said he was confident of the future of electronic publishing. DK saw multimedia sales rise 31 per cent in the period to account for 15 per cent of group turnover.

The exploded book, page 3

Grand Met's plans to tap into Chinese spirits

Teresa Poole
Peking

Confucius, who had a very strict view of the "virtuous, moral life", would not have approved. In his birthplace of Qufu, in Shandong province, bottles of Smirnoff vodka, Grand Reserve VSOP, and Old Gold whisky are now rolling off the production lines at Grand Metropolitan's first Chinese joint venture, which was officially opened this week.

But will Chinese yuppies develop a taste for vodka? "The issue here is about developing a new category," Richard Walling, Asia managing director for the group's drinks arm, International Distillers and Vintners (IDV), said yesterday. "Vodka is a tiny category in China today. We think there is an opportunity to develop

Smirnoff into the refreshment drinking area, that it is the younger consumers who are prepared to experiment, willing to pay a little bit of extra money for a high quality product that is mixable and a long drink. To that extent we are probably competing as much with premium local beers."

In other words, vodka will not be pitched head to head against the national white spirit - "bai jiu". The Qufu production line is a \$27m (£17m) venture with the state-owned Qufu Distillery, producers of the successful "Confucius Family Liquor". IDV has a two-thirds stake, and its Chinese partner holds the rest.

Advertising starts this week in Shanghai for Smirnoff, or Si Mei Luo (Thinking Beautiful Luo River) as it is known in Chinese, a wholly Chinese-made product. Grand Reserve, or Di

Xuan (Emperor's Choice) brandy, is a new brand name to be pitched at the southern city of Guangzhou. Old Gold, or Ao Jin (Proud Gold), whisky is on sale in Peking, a brand name previously only used in Brazil, but a blend "crafted especially for the Chinese market".

Local production is IDV's preferred long-term strategy. So far, IDV's imports have been well under \$100m a year, because its brands do not compete with premium status liquors. But Grand Met's chairman, George Bull, yesterday said that, with imports accounting for less than 1 per cent of the China total drinks market, IDV was aiming at the "huge potential" of the domestically produced market. And at less than £3 a bottle, the first three products are more affordable than imports, which are tariff rated at 70 per cent.

Limelight shares in slump

Shares in the Mobern kitchens group Limelight crashed 35p to 107.5p yesterday only months after the group came to the market at 175p, netting £60m for the company's founder, Stephen Boler, writes Tom Stevenson.

The meltdown in the company's share price so soon after flotation is a serious embarrassment for its blue chip advisers, the sponsor N M Rothschild and the broker Cazenove.

The collapse in the share price followed confirmation by the company that trading in the first 12 weeks of the year had been difficult.

Limelight said total group sales were 11 per cent less than the same period a year ago, with its kitchen division the worst affected. Sales in kitchens are down 24 per cent on last year, the company said.

Limelight sells established brand-name products, that include Mobern, Kitchens Direct, Sharps, Dolphin and Portland. "Mobern is suffering from weak demand and sales are down 32 per cent, which compares to a 74 per cent rise in the same period a year ago, the company said."

Limelight was valued at £175m by a placing and intermediaries offer last November which raised £113.8m. The money went to existing shareholders, who were selling or cutting their stakes, rather than to the company itself. Mr Boler, who is also a large shareholder at Manchester City football club, reduced his stake from just under 50 per cent to 17 per cent, raising £60m from the flotation.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100		Dow Jones		Nikkei		HSE		LSE	
4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000
4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000
4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000
4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000
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4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000
4400	7100	13000	17000	15000	18000	10000	12000	14000	16000

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling		UK medium gilt		US long bond		Money Market Rates		Bond Yields	
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)
6.44	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	7.20	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Long Bond (%)

CURRENCIES									
£/\$		£/DM		£/¥		Pound		Dollar	
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change
1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	1.64	2.76	Yesterday	Change	Yesterday	Change

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COMMENT

In the absence of any form of regulation for the bus industry Stagecoach has made a fortune by crunching the competition and, along the way, the customer as well. The railways are not turning out quite the same way

Stagecoach could be in for a very rough ride

Brian Cox, the chairman of South West Trains, must be used by now to apologise for cancellations; his long-suffering passengers are certainly used to taking his published timetables with generous helpings of S.A. The one cancellation he will not be apologising for, however, is the craven decision of MPs to abandon today's scheduled grilling of SWT before the Commons Transport select committee.

The Conservative majority on the committee has decided that it would not be appropriate to continue with its work programme now that an election has been called. Nothing to do, you understand, with the appalling advertisement for rail privatisation that SWT has turned into.

Those who had been looking forward to some blood sport on the committee corridor of the Commons will have to console themselves instead with the press conference called by the Labour minority to protest at this blatant piece of politicking. Mr Cox's day will come, however. Presumably Labour does sweep to power. SWT may be in for a rougher ride than anything the select committee could throw at it.

That goes not just for SWT, but for its parent company Stagecoach too. In four short years the group has been transformed from a modest bus operator into one of the biggest quoted transport groups on the market by a combination of chairman Brian Souter's guile and the willingness of sober-suited bankers to throw money at him.

Stagecoach is a classic example of a business that has risen too fast on a tide of cheap paper, mounting debts and the deal-making reputation of one man. So far Mr Souter has had all the breaks. He spotted that the bus industry was being privatised in a way that put passengers very firmly in the back seat, leaving entrepreneurs such as him to drive what can only be described as a coach and horses through what passes for competition policy.

In the absence of any form of regulation for the bus industry, Stagecoach has made a fortune by crunching the competition and, along the way, the customer as well. Unfortunately, the railways are not turning out quite the same way. They have timesome things like performance regimes, minimum standards and big fat fines for those who cut too many corners.

The City is belatedly waking up to the possibility that Stagecoach has over-extended itself. An incoming Labour government and a much more hostile regulatory environment may be all it takes to turn the run into a rout.

Labour's utilities policy smacks of confusion

It was a little rich of Labour to seize on yesterday's Trade and Industry Select Committee report on energy regulation to back its case for a windfall profits tax. That was not what the report either said or implied, though

it did make the entirely obvious and uncontentious observation that electricity profits had been excessive and that this was in part down to the fact that regulators had underestimated the scope for efficiency gains.

Moreover, the report actually contradicts Labour policy in recommending the retention of the RPI-X system of price regulation. This is found to be a superior system to any of the other methods examined. Labour policy for regulating the electricity industry has not yet been set in concrete, but it has for water and it is reasonable to assume that Labour would wish to apply the same "profit sharing" principles to electricity.

Unfortunately for Labour, "annual formula profit sharing" and other alternatives such as "rate of return" and "sliding scale regulation" are specifically dismissed by the committee "because they are likely to erode incentives". Quite so, but were the committee's Labour members aware they were disavowing party policy when they signed up to this document? After Gordon Brown's continued confusion yesterday about who the windfall profit tax would apply to and on what basis, it seems all too likely that they were not.

It is still not clear what Labour wants to do about the utilities, other than make political capital out of them and pillage them for as much as it dares in its search for new forms of taxation. Now along comes the Trade and Industry select committee to say that the present system of price regulation be left pretty much unchanged.

The irony is that this is the very same system that resulted in the "excess" everyone complains of. Furthermore, it is a system which in a way is actually designed to encourage excess. The idea behind price cap regulation is that it provides encouragement to improved efficiency because companies be allowed to keep for shareholders any "excess" return they earn. These efficiency gains are then recognised on behalf of customers at the time of the five-year periodic review.

What the windfall profits tax does, in effect, is retrospectively attempt to claw back these "excess" returns. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that intellectually Labour is all at sea over these issues.

Lanica won't profit from waking up Co-op

Labour has promised it would change the Rules to protect the Co-Op movement from break-up but in the meantime what is the Co-Op doing to save itself? The Co-Op may have its heart in the right place but is also paralysed by its worthy democratic traditions and riven by the in-fighting of its vested interest groups. If it fails to re-invent itself, it will face death by a thousand cuts. Take the following. The Co-Op movement is run for the benefit of the 51 different regional societies which in turn have 560,000 members between them. Individual mem-

bership costs £1 for life. It is refundable if you leave but cannot be sold at a profit. Benefits include a free glossy magazine, discount vouchers in some societies, and the option to join the Co-Op Women's Guild.

Not tempted? The biggest supposed benefit is the opportunity to have your say in the running of your society going from divisional committee, to regional committee and if lucky and well connected, on to the board. It is a creaking, bureaucratic structure that would never be invented if it did not already exist. The question is what can be done to change it.

One approach would be to merge the 51 societies into one to achieve greater economies of scale. A second would be to start marketing itself on its Co-Op credentials, rather than the Co-Op Bank has done so successfully with its stance on ethical investing. A third is to revive the "divi". This scheme, which qualifies members for a 5 per cent discount, is already on test in Northern Ireland and has recently been revived in Scotland.

The overtures of the youthful Andrew Regan at Lanica Trust look doomed for one simple reason. Unlike the mutual building societies, the individual members do not actually own their society, they just qualify for a say in its operation. As that stake cannot be sold at a profit Mr Regan looks to be on a hiding to nothing. He's shaken a complacent and very old organisation, but he's unlikely to make a penny for his trouble.

BZW chief gets package of over £3m

John Willcock

Barclays paid Bill Harrison, chief executive of its BZW investment bank unit, £2.85m last year, in part due to a £1.5m "golden hello" for when he joined from Robert Fleming.

This is in stark contrast to Barclays' chairman, Andrew Burton, who received £306,000 in salary and bonuses last year, while the chief executive, Martin Taylor, was paid £820,000. The bank's annual report,

published yesterday, also shows that Mr Harrison was guaranteed an annual bonus of £1.25m payable at the end of this month. He was also paid a third of his £300,000 salary since joining last September.

Mr Harrison's total "emoluments" for the year increased to over £3.1m when share award schemes and pension contributions are included.

A Barclays spokesperson said that most of Mr Harrison's pay package was a one-time cash

payment that was the cost of recruiting him and was required to attract a manager of his calibre. The guaranteed bonus was also a one-off.

"It's not that he's going to get £2.9m every year," said the spokesperson. "He's going to get £300,000 plus a bonus."

Mr Harrison's guaranteed minimum bonus for 1997 is £900,000, which is payable by the end of March next year, according to the accounts.

The spokesperson added that

Mr Harrison's pay should only be judged against that of his American investment banking rivals, who often get much more.

The figures come against a background of difficult times for BZW. Its pre-tax profits fell 29 per cent to £204m last year as an 18 per cent rise in costs outstripped revenue growth.

Mr Harrison, former head of investment banking at Flemings, was hired after the death of his predecessor David Band last March. Mr Taylor picked him as the man to lead BZW on to the world stage, where at the moment New York-based "bulge bracket" investment banks like Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch dominate.

Mr Band and Mr Taylor had already identified a key obstacle to joining the bigger US rivals, the relative weakness of BZW's markets division. This division includes bonds, derivatives and foreign exchange, and it underperformed last year.



Bill Harrison: A guaranteed £1.25m bonus is also due

to lead the markets division. More than 140 new staff have arrived since Mr Diamond joined.

This drive continued yesterday with the top-profile appointment of Roman Schmidt, head of German capital markets at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, to be BZW's new global head of debt syndicate.

Mr Schmidt is well known in the City as a key player in the European capital markets, and he has just completed six years with Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt. Prior to that he worked at CSFB in London, and he typifies the big appointments Mr Harrison has been making in an attempt to turn the investment bank around.

The downside of this hiring has been that BZW has been forced to let go other employees. Buying these City people out of their contracts added £45m to BZW's wages bill last year.

Lira falters on talk of EMU delays

Yvette Cooper

The sensitivity of the markets to any adverse news about EMU was exposed yesterday when the mark climbed to a four-month high against the lira following claims by Klaus Dieter Kuehbach, a Bundesbank council member, that the introduction of the single currency may have to be delayed.

Mr Kuehbach said: "If I interpret the criteria verbatim, as Finance Minister Theo Waigel has always demanded... delay is the only consequence, unless the federal government still manages to limit the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP [and of that] in view of the current economic developments I have my doubts." His comments followed Monday's reiteration by Mr Waigel that meeting the deficit criteria was more important than the EMU timetable.

The lira fell yesterday to its lowest level against the mark since rejoining the exchange rate mechanism in November last year, ending the day at 1005.8 against the mark. The lira also suffered from the concerns about a delay to EMU. The Bank of Spain and the Bank of Italy intervened during the day to sell marks. European bonds weakened, with Italian and Spanish bonds taking most of the strain. The moves were on a day when Italy became the first country to issue a euro-denominated eurobond, raising £730m.

Analysts said the markets had become highly sensitive

about EMU delays. Alison Cottrell of Paine Webber said: "None of the fundamentals has changed compared to, say, a week ago. It's just that the taboos against talking about a delay seem to have dropped. The German press are discussing delays. So the markets are prepared to interpret every piece of news in that light."

Stephen King of HSBC James Capel said: "Mr Waigel didn't say anything new this week. The only significance of his remarks is that he is still prepared to make them at a time when he knows the markets are jittery."

Other analysts shrugged off the importance of remarks made by Bundesbank council members. Thomas Rayer of Societe Generale Strauss Thornhill said: "Kuehbach's comments are fortuitous, but the Buba guys can say what they like - it's down to the politicians to make the decision."

Meanwhile the Bundesbank yesterday appeared to support the idea that the circumstances of reunification should exempt Germany from the Maastricht debt criteria of 60 per cent of GDP, which it is bound to fall in 1997. New figures showed German debt has more than doubled since 1989 to 2,135 million marks. But analysts said that special pleading to relax the debt criteria for Germany should not be interpreted as the precursor for a German-led easing of the Maastricht deficit test of 3 per cent.



Alex Krauer (above), chairman of Novartis, the giant Swiss drugs group formed a year ago from the merger of Ciba and Sandoz, said most of the integration of the two businesses should be completed by the end of this year. Mr Krauer unveiled a 2 per cent rise in net income before exceptional items to SF4.18bn (£1.8bn) for 1996, the

first results for the combined group. Merger costs came to SF1.9bn after tax. Novartis expects to shed around 4,300 people over the next three years, with 400 going in the UK by the end of 1997. The group plans to centre its respiratory research efforts at a new unit in Sussex, employing 500 people. Photograph: Reuters

Cantab seals £11m deal with Glaxo

Magnus Grimond

The recent strong run in the shares of Cantab Pharmaceuticals, the biotech group, was brought to an abrupt end yesterday after it announced an £11m deal with Glaxo Wellcome.

The drugs giant is paying £5m for the world-wide marketing and development rights for Cantab's DISC HSV vaccine for genital herpes and investing

£6m for a 4 per cent stake in the company. The shares, which have risen nearly 200p since the beginning of March, dived 60p to £10.12p yesterday, but are still well up on the 56p at which they stood in October.

The deal with Glaxo, the world's leading herpes group, had been widely anticipated and analysts attributed the fall in the price to profit-taking. Duncan Moore at Morgan Stan-

ley said it was a case of "buy on the rumour, sell on the news". However, Jurek Sikorski, who joined Cantab as chief executive last August, welcomed yesterday's deal, which follows licensing deals for other potential drugs with Pfizer and SmithKline Beecham. "The signing of this agreement marks a significant step forward for Cantab," he said, "because all three are in the top 10 in the

pharmaceuticals industry worldwide. I don't know any other biotechnology company which has more than three corporate partners in the top 10."

The results of UK phase 1 trials of the vaccine in 24 healthy volunteers will be announced at a strategy briefing today. If it reaches the market, expected early next century, HSV will represent the first vaccine in the Glaxo portfolio.

Capital director's wife owns shares in casino predator

Patrick Tocher

The wife of Capital Corporation's gaming director has emerged as the surprise owner of shares in London Clubs, the rival casino operator which has tabled a hostile £181m takeover bid.

Capital, owner of two upmarket casinos in London's Mayfair, including Crocford's, yesterday issued its formal defence docu-

ment, which showed that Julie Dunkley holds 2,000 shares in London Clubs in a single-company personal equity plan.

By contrast her husband, John Dunkley, does not own a single share in Capital Corporation, though the £200,000-a-year director of gaming holds 1.5 million options worth £3.2m at last night's closing price of 210p, down 3p.

The defence document also shows that pre-tax profits at Capital slipped to £9.2m, after an exceptional charge of £2.8m, from £13.1m previously.

The results were flagged in a profits warning in January when it blamed a lower volume of high-rolls, particularly at the tail-end of last year, and a lower overall win percentage in the second half for the shortfall.

Capital said the new year had started well and argued it was a more efficient operator than London Clubs, which counts the Ritz Club and Les Ambassadeurs among its seven casinos in the capital.

Capital claimed that in the last four years it made operating profits of £33 on every £100 of win turnover, compared with £20 for London Clubs.

Capital appeared to rule out speculation it would take the Crocford's name overseas. "We are not distracted by unsuccessful, risky or speculative overseas ventures," it said.

In response London Clubs, which also has casino interests in South Africa and Las Vegas, said the comparable figure for its two top-end casinos was £39 and noted that Capital's prof-

its had fallen in each of the last four years.

"Capital Corporation's track record does not allow it to put up a credible defence," said Alan Goodenough, London Clubs' chief executive. "The company's offer document demonstrates a lack of understanding of how to maximise returns from the London gaming market."

IN BRIEF

Organised crime links investigated

The National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) told Congress it was investigating more than 10 brokerages and 19 companies for possible organised crime links and other securities violations. "Organised crime is included, but our look is much broader than that, at any violation of securities rules or criminal behaviour," said Michael Robinson, a spokesman for NASD. Last month, Mary Schapiro, head of regulation at NASD, wrote to John Dingell, a Michigan Democrat, informing him the industry body was investigating all the securities firms mentioned in a *Business Week* article in December about organised crime.

Pension fund halts Nomura dealings

America's largest public pension fund, the California Public Employees' Retirement System (Calpers), said it would suspend trading with Nomura Securities following the recently announced scandal at the Japanese brokerage. "We are deeply concerned with the events that have taken place at Nomura Securities," said Charles Valdes, chairman of Calpers' investment committee. Calpers joins Nikko International Capital Management, Daiwa International Capital Management and Nomura Investment Management, which have stopped trading with Nomura.

Shell and Texaco in joint deal

Shell and Texaco have signed a memorandum of understanding to combine part of their US refining and marketing operations. The businesses affected are in the west and midwest of the US, but will continue to market petrol under Shell and Texaco brands. Shell will own 56 per cent of the new company and Texaco 44 per cent. Shell said the link-up, which mirrors a similar deal between BP and Mobil last year, would merge management functions and backup systems in an attempt to cut costs. The new group will have eight large refineries, representing about 13 per cent of US refining capacity.

BT expands Japanese venture

British Telecom is expanding its joint venture in Japan with Marubeni Corporation, which offers data transmission services to business customers. BT said it was merging the joint venture company, Network Information Service, in which it has a 36 per cent stake and Marubeni a 41 per cent stake, into BT Japan, its main operation. The new company will be 51 per cent owned by BT and will have 200 staff and 10,000 customers offering BT's Concert international business products.

World Telecom to raise £7m

World Telecom, which sells global phone cards to customers, is to raise £7m in a flotation on the Alternative Investment Market. The prospectus issued yesterday showed 41 per cent of World Telecom would be sold to outside investors, with shares priced at 150p each. The sale will net Peter Gelardi, the managing director, almost £4m, with a similar windfall for Andrew McWhirter, finance director. The sale values World Telecom at £32m.

Challenging year for Charter

Rail track tie and welding products manufacturer Charter announced a rise in underlying operating profits for 1996 from £89.7m to £92.7m in what chairman Jeffrey Herbert described as a challenging year. Earnings per share, excluding exceptional items, rose 5 per cent to 70.9p and the dividend was increased 7 per cent to 29.5p.

Wilson Connolly pledges extra payout

Wilson Connolly promised shareholders a £10m special dividend worth 5p a share yesterday following its withdrawal from commercial property development and expressed optimism that British house prices would continue to rise. The company posted 1996 results showing a 17 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £26.4m.

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Academi Holdings (F)	0.88m (1.25m)	0.56m (0.83m)	2.75p (4.32p)	2p (2.75p)
Alcatel Alenia Space (F)	-	93.9m (83.8m)	34.42p (25.17p)	28p (15.4p)
BSE International (F)	95.8m (84.3m)	25.7m (24.1m)	-3.49p (5.04p)	3.52p (2.2p)
Capital Corp (F)	43.1m (51.4m)	8.2m (13.1m)	6.29p (8.88p)	8.15p (8.12p)
Charter (F)	899.8m (854m)	46m (87.2m)	13.7p (87.5p)	29.5p (27.5p)
Charmant Securities (F)	186m (172m)	-3.05m (12.3m)	-3.8p (18.1p)	8.87p (9.66p)
Dale (F)	955m (1.023m)	45.6m (52.1m)	15.2p (20.9p)	16.5p (18.9p)
Darwell Valley (F)	-	7.3m (4.4m)	17.44p (11.41p)	6.16p (10.9p)
Dorling Kindersley (F)	85.4m (80.2m)	6.77m (6.22m)	8.6p (5.3p)	1.5p (1.5p)
Eco Holdings (F)	13.9m (12.8m)	-1.56m (-0.10m)	-4.4p (-0.3p)	nil (0.25p)
Ex-Laudis Properties (F)	4.23m (5.01m)	0.37m (0.97m)	0.23p (-0.09p)	-
James Fisher (F)	38.0m (30.2m)	5.07m (5.31m)	15.45p (22.5p)	2.75p (2p)
Harley Oil & Gas (F)	37.2m (53.2m)	6.16m (-6.96m)	5p (-5.9p)	1p (1p)
Shymond Hotel (F)	1.329m (1.258m)	70.1m (84.2m)	18p (25.78p)	12.75p (12.75p)
Wall Engineering (F)	23.1m (19.8m)	12.4m (7.72m)	21.78p (15.25p)	10.02p (10.02p)
Wampden Group (F)	41.5m (38.6m)	1.63m (1.53m)	7.27p (6.3p)	2.4p (2.3p)
Lopes (F)	12.1m (12.5m)	-1.49m (1.46m)	-2.1p (1.41p)	0.75p (-)
Mandara (F)	163m (155m)	5.49m (11.8m)	17.45p (20.24p)	11.5p (-)
Maybank Group (F)	52.8m (49.1m)	8.5m (5.8m)	18.8p (18.8p)	8.0p (7.2p)
Wong (F)	256m (256m)	24.2m (-21.5m)	7.3p (-13.4p)	4.2p (-)
Ordnance Holdings (F)	50.8m (23.4m)	9.88m (-8.61m)	8.1p (-14.0p)	4p (3p)
Pittman Zincworks (F)	186m (174m)	14.0m (13.2m)	19.25p (18.81p)	5.5p (2.85p)
Reichart Group (F)	108m (93.7m)	13.2m (16.0m)	18.8p (15.96p)	6.6p (-)
Reynold Dunlop (F)	252m (245m)	17.6m (15.2m)	21.7p (17.9p)	9.55p (8.5p)
Secure Trust (F)	-	9.4m (9.2m)	44.2p (43.4p)	20p (18p)
Servicore (F)	32.2m (26.2m)	3.55m (2.37m)	21.5p (17.3p)	8.5p (-)
Spinides (F)	98.5m (85.8m)	9.87m (8.22m)	19.5p (16.3p)	3.2p (2.85p)
Walthamstow Village (F)	22.1m (208m)	22.2m (23.7m)	21.7p (23.8p)	10.45p (9.5p)
Wilson Connolly (F)	300m (243m)	26.4m (22.5m)	9p (8.1p)	8.9p (-)
Wolfsley (F)	2.28m (2.08m)	124m (111m)	14.63p (13.42p)	3.3p (3.1p)

(F) - Foreign (F) - Foreign (F) - Foreign (F) - Foreign

business

Bobby Moore's son finds a new home at Chelsea

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

Every schoolboy knows that the great Bobby Moore, captain of England's triumphant 1966 World Cup soccer team in 1966, played for West Ham. Now I hear that Bobby's son, Dean Moore, has been made publican of the Chelsea Gate, a pub slap bang opposite Chelsea's ground at Stamford Bridge.

Mr Moore jnr has been assigned this pub by The Magic Pub Company, which acquired it with a bundle of other boozers last year from Greene King for £200m. Can this Chelsea appointment be a practical joke at the young Mr Moore's expense?

Mounted police are stationed outside the doors of The Chelsea Gate on match days. Whether this is to prevent angry Chelsea fans from wreaking revenge on the son of their former East End rival remains a mystery.

The bitter-sweet news reaches us that Sam Jaffa, noted BBC journalist, has leapt the fence to become head of media relations for Price Waterhouse, the big-six accountancy firm. Hymning the joys of audits and corporation tax will be quite a contrast to Mr Jaffa's 17-year sojourn at the Beeb. He has reported on the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Zeebrugge ferry disaster and the Wapping print riots, to name just a few.

He is also famous for having been introduced by a presenter when he was in Belfast with the line: "Sam Jaffa was with the Orangemen."

So why the change to accountancy? "I know people think it's selling out, but I look at it as selling in," he says. "It was time for a change, and PW came up with an attractive offer."

A jovial and sociable 44-year-old from Leeds who now lives in Chelsea, Mr Jaffa was known for throwing parties for fellow journalists during the lengthy Blue Arrow trial



Eastender: Bobby Moore in his West Ham glory days

in the 1960s. The football-playing racehorse part-owner also covered a large chunk of the Maxwell affair and published a collection of anecdotes called *Maxwell Stories*.

He's got another book out in April, *Safe as Houses*, which traces financial scandals from the South Sea Bubble to the present day. In it he devotes a chapter to BCCI, the corrupt international bank which was closed by regulators six years ago. The auditors of BCCI, who were much criticised by regulators after the closure, were none other than PW. No doubt Mr Jaffa's new employers will find his book gripping.

Michael Toulmin, who lost the job of chief executive at United Provincial Newspapers last year, has now been relieved of the chairmanship and has left the group, part of United News & Media, with a pay-off of more than £400,000 after 36 years' service.

He has gone abroad to ski and ponder his future, armed with an antique barograph, presented by his successor as chief executive, Stephen Grabner, a framed cartoon and a mock-up front page of tributes, a part of every departing journalist's leaving ceremony.

He was also paid glowing tributes by his successor, by Lord Stevens, the chairman of United News & Media, and by Dugal Nisbet-Smith, the recently retired director of the Newspaper Society.

But he left no doubt that his departure was not voluntary and he has no firm plans for the future. "At the tender age of 53 I am fortunate to have this change thrust upon me when I can still look forward to putting in a few more years broadening my experience elsewhere," he told his colleagues.

He had been chief executive since 1985 and chairman since 1988. He was on a two-year contract and his remuneration in 1995 was £205,311. He also holds options on around 183,000 shares. Mr Grabner, 38, was formerly managing director of the *Daily Telegraph* and joined UNM last year as executive director with responsibility for all the group newspapers, including the *Express* titles, and as chief executive of UPN, which is being refocused on its heartland in Yorkshire and the North of England.

Returning to East End sporting heroes for a moment, former heavyweight pugilist Henry Cooper will be among those playing at a charity golf tournament, the City Open, organised by Reuters in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust.

The first stage in April involves 40 pairs per day at 10 golf days, most at the London Golf Club near Sevenoaks. Each pair pays £200 to enter the knock-out round, and the finalists will play in the Bahamas at the end of May.

The organisers aim to raise £10,000 for the charity.

More details can be found on Cityscreen on Reuters by typing in KIDS and hitting enter.

John Willcock

Wolseley errs on the side of caution

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Wolseley has a track record most investors would give their eye teeth for. Richard Ireland, the chairman, can rightly boast that the builders' merchant has consistently delivered compound earnings growth of 20 per cent for as long as anyone cares to remember.

Last year's eight profits dip now looks like a mere hiccup and the latest half-year figures make encouraging reading – even if Wolseley continued its tradition of playing down the prospects.

Mr Ireland's words of caution are worth repeating. The upturn in the UK housing market is described as fragile and "unlikely to deliver much benefit to our UK distribution activities until later this year". There is as yet no sign of a "consistent pattern of improvement across all regions in our lightside and heavy-side activities".

Mr Ireland is as pessimistic about the immediate future for in the UK, "Consumers may be reluctant to increase expenditure to any great extent until after the general election," he suggests.

That is to say nothing of the poor state of the French and Austrian economies as they prepare for European economic and monetary union. All told, the building distribution division in Europe, including the UK, saw trading profits decline by £1.6m to £47.6m.

As for building distribution in the US – Wolseley's largest market – first-half trading profits advanced to £56.6m, a 22 per cent rise, but again there was a caveat, this time concerning the strength of sterling. This wiped £4.2m off Wolseley's bottom line and the hit will be even bigger in the second half if exchange rates stay at current levels.

None of this should give cause for undue concern. The healthy state of the balance sheet – gearing is just 13 per cent despite £71m being spent on acquisitions – means the roll-out of the Plumb Center and Pipeline Center branches should continue apace. Another 64 were added in Europe in the first half, bringing the total to 924, while the US now boasts 508, up from 474.

But in a low-inflation environment where price increases are becoming a distant memory, acquisitions are increasingly necessary to drive earnings forward. Without them, analysts reckon Wolseley would be sitting on an embarrassingly big £150m cash pile by the end of 1999, even assuming capital expenditure continued to outpace depreciation by a comfortable 30 per cent.

In terms of branch coverage, Germany remains a big gap on the map, but buying into Europe's largest market will be expensive and investors may be reluctant to take more Wolseley paper. The other concern is in the US, especially in the lumber business which

is exposed to the new-build market.

House broker Albert E. Sharp looks for pre-tax profits of £274m, rising to £307m in 1998. That puts the shares, down 1.5p to 495p, on a prospective p/e of 15 falling to less than 14. Hold.

in the year to December. But even stripping that lot out, the marginal rise from £84.9m to £86.3m suggests it has a long way to go to break free from the cycle.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the good news came from the consumer businesses. Glyndwed shifted 15 per cent more sinks and cookers last year, with its up-market products doing particularly well. As well as the Agas, which sell at up to £8,000 a piece, the less exalted Flavel-Leisure cooker business is expanding capacity to meet demand for its new Rangemaster offering, which retails at up to £1,800.

The pipe systems business was boosted by a first full-year contribution of £15m from Victaulic, but much of the rest of Glyndwed was hamstrung by weak European markets and a slump in the price of non-ferrous metals. The weak German market hit demand for drain covers and the like, while the division bashing engineering steel into the shapes required by makers of everything from hand tools to tractors saw volumes slump 7 per cent in 1996. Exports, mostly to Europe, slumped £15m and the metals processing operation did well to hold its profits fall to 3 per cent.

The real pain, however, came in metals distribution, where a 40 per cent

slide in aluminium prices sliced profits by 44 per cent to £13m.

Many of Glyndwed's problems in 1996 should not recur this year, when the continued upturn in the cycle should help. It will also most likely use its 26 per cent gearing to continue diversifying outside the UK. Assuming profits around £94m, the shares, down 0.5p at 304p, stand on a modest multiple of 12. Attractive only as a short-term buy.

Heal's has a lot in store

Heal's stock market flotation is likely to attract a good deal of interest from smaller investors. A well-known high street brand, it has a strong reputation particularly for beds, and its customers have included the Queen.

The shares have now been priced at 175p, valuing Heal's at £213m. On earnings last year of 12.7p, that puts the shares on a historic multiple of 14, or 17.4 after adjustments, a discount to the sector.

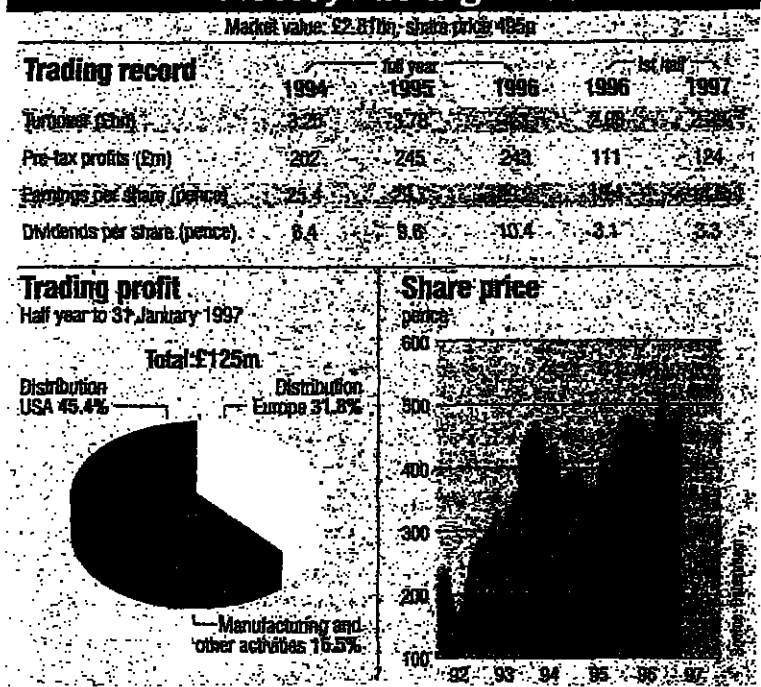
One drawback for smaller punters is that this is only a placing so investors not linked to a broker can only buy shares after dealings start on 24 March. Another is that Heal's is coming to the market in a period of some uncertainty. The marathon election campaign is unsettling and whichever party wins, the stock market is expecting higher interest rates, which could affect sales of higher ticket items, such as beds and sofas. There have also been signs of a slowdown in some parts of the retail market in recent months.

Against that is the prospect of windfall bonuses from the Halifax, Woolwich and other mutual society flotations. Heal's ought to benefit from this.

The trick for the company will be to expand its store portfolio from its base of three into a larger chain without drifting downwards into the mass market. The company is raising £1.5m to fund expansion and is looking at around 10 stores in total, which looks about right. So far Heal's has two stores in London and one in Guildford, so there is plenty of room for growth in the UK before moving into buoyant overseas retail markets like Dublin.

Heal's is always going to be a cyclical company whose fortunes are linked to the housing market. And competition will come not just from Habitat and the Conran Shop, but department stores such as the mighty John Lewis. So there are threats, but with a strong brand name, the competitively priced shares are still worth a look.

Wolseley: at a glance



INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LATEST RESULTS AND TOP 50 TEAMS

TOP Fifty LEAGUE TABLE

CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 9 MARCH

POS.	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	MR PETER FRANKENTHAL	JOSI MARTI	796
2	MR ASHLEY BRETTE	RELEGATION 12	788
3	MR SEAN BROSNAN	OASIS	776
4	MR WILLIAM BARR	KRUGER EC	772
5	MR SIMON LIU	DEFENCE ROVERS	771
6	MR SCOTT MCINERNEY		770
7	MR JOHN COX	SOUTHILL FC	769
8	MR GRAHAM LONGSDANE	SANDLING STROLLERS	767
9	MR ADAM HOGG	BLAGGY HOGG	766
10	MR JONATHAN FURNISS	REDSTAR CARDIFF	765
11	MR IAN GROUT	SILK CITY	762
12	MR RICK YAP	OUT OF MIND	762
13	MR GARFIELD MCCULLEN	GARFIELD BOYS SECOND	761
14	MR KEITH HARRY	ORGANIC MANURE FC	761
15	MR PAUL MATTHEW	THE DOOR MAT	760
16	MR PETER FRANKENTHAL	ARLENSIU	756
17	MR J GOWIN	NORWOOD	753
18	MR A MORGAN	KICK START	752
19	MR ANDREW GODDEN	RC. ALZEY	752
20	MR SIMON DRAPER	PLATE EC	751
21	MR GARY HARROWS	101 STARS	751
22	MR JONATHAN DAVIS	GOLDEN TEAM	751
23	MR ROBERT GREENFIELD	THE GULLS	751
24	MR JONATHAN MCCROSSEN	WASH TOW ARMY	750
25	MR DARREN NICHOLAS	EDNA	749
26	MR JOE GOODING	TEAM SQUIDRIPS	749
27	MR TONY AKINDALE	OLLIE VILLA	748
28	MR WOODHOUSE	LEE BURNS CHEST	747
29	MR ANDY SWANNEY	DOG'S BRICK	746
30	MR P HEMMINGWAY	WAGON WHEELS	746
31	MR O J JOHNSON	THE AWAY WINNERS	746
32	DR STEPHEN MATTHEWS	IMPERIAL STATES	745
33	MR PAUL RICHARDSON	CINCINATI STORM	744
34	MR ANDREW BOLTON	ANDREW'S B TEAM	744
35	MR P CURRAN		742
36	MR CHRIS SCOTT	BRUCE LEE FC	741
37	MR BILL COOPER	YIP MOP 2000	741
38	MR BARRY MORGAN	BAZZA'S BOYS	741
39	MR G WHITE	WHITE CITY	741
40	MR ASHLEY BRETTE	FAKE MADRID	739
41	MR J TARBOX	WARDEN	738
42	MR KRISTOV BAERWALD	TOM & PHILIP	738
43	MR STEVEN HART	KEE'S COWBOYS	737
44	MR S KING	CRUISING ALEXANDREA	737
45	DR STEVE GILL	MORE POINTS THAN SOTON	737
46	MR MARK HAYDEN	TROWBRIDGE WANDERERS	737
47	MR ANDY LANE	IF ANYONE CAN TOUCAN	737
48	MR PETER FRANKENTHAL	SANDINO	736
49	MR R PRINGLE	DEEPDALE VILLA 7	735
50	MR K B MALCOLM	INTER MALCOLM	735

THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Today we publish the latest results in our Independent Fantasy Football game, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs.

The Team Market and Scores table published below, shows four scores. The Week 31 (Wk 31) column lists all points scored in Premiership matches played between Monday 10 March - Sunday 16 March inclusive. Column B lists all points scored before the transfer period. Column A lists all points scored after the transfer period. The Overall (Ov) column lists the total amount of points scored in all matches played from Saturday 17 August - Sunday 16 March.

Also published today is the Top 50 League table (see left). It lists the overall top scoring Independent Fantasy Football managers and their teams for matches played between Saturday 17 August - Sunday 9 March.

Results will be published every Wednesday in The Independent for all games played from the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent on Sunday. The overall Top 50 League table will be printed every Wednesday and again on Sunday. Terms and conditions as previously published.

SCORING SYSTEM

4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win, 1 point for a draw ■ Lose 1 point for a yellow card ■ Lose 3 points for a red card

TEAM MARKET AND SCORES

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 16 MARCH; WEEK 31 SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 3 MARCH - 16 MARCH

FOOTBALL LEAGUE PLAYERS PLAYED FIRST 3 MARCH - 16 MARCH																									
CODE PLAYER TEAM					POINTS - 16 MARCH					CODE PLAYER TEAM					POINTS - 16 MARCH										
W31	B	A	Ov	VALUE	W31	B	A	Ov	VALUE	W31	B	A	Ov	VALUE	W31	B	A	Ov	VALUE						
GOALKEEPERS																									
300	Seales	ARS	0	0	47	5.9	476	Seales	TOT	5	0	13	19	4.4	653	Van Der Laan	DER	0	2	5	7	1.6			
301	Seales	ARS	0	0	47	5.9	477	Edwards	LIV	0	0	4	19	4.4	654	Edwards	EVE	0	2	5	7	1.6			
302	Bozich	AV	0	0	37	42	4.0	478	Neville (G)	MU	0	0	23	46	6.9	655	Kandach	EVE	0	1	7	23	42	1.9	
303	Bozich	AV	0	0	37	42	4.0	479	Neville (F)	MU	0	0	17	25	37	4.7	656	Parkinson	EVE	0	1	7	23	42	1.9
304	Bozich	AV	0	0	37	42	4.0	480	Smith	MU	0	0	17	25	37	4.7	657	Sloan	EVE	0	1	7	23	42	1.9
305	Haddock	CHE	0	0	12	12	1.5	481	Pallister	MU	0	0	20	37	47	4.9	658	Grant	EVE	0	1	7	23	42	1.9
306	Opengrove	CHE	0	0	12	12	1.5	482	May	MU	0	0	20	37	47	4.9	659	Bryner	LEE	0	2	15	32	47	3.0
307	Opengrove	CHE	0	0	12	12	1.5	483	Victors	MU	0	0	20	37	47	4.9	660	Thomas	LEE	0	2	15	32	47	3.0
308	Opengrove	CHE	0	0	12	12	1.5	484	Victors	MU	0	0	20	37	47	4.9	661	Palmer	LEE	0	1	11	17	23	1.0
309	Southall	EVE	0	0	1	1	0.3	485	Pearson	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	662	Barnes	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
310	Southall	EVE	0	0	1	1	0.3	486	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	663	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
311	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	487	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	664	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
312	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	488	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	665	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
313	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	489	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	666	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
314	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	490	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	667	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
315	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	491	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	668	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
316	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	492	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	669	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
317	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	493	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	670	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
318	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	494	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	671	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
319	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	495	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	672	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
320	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	496	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	673	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
321	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	497	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	674	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
322	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	498	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	675	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
323	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	499	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	676	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
324	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	500	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	677	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
325	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	501	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	678	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
326	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	502	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	679	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
327	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	503	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	680	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
328	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	504	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	681	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
329	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	505	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	682	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
330	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	506	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	683	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
331	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	507	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	684	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
332	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	508	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	685	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
333	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	509	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	686	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
334	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	510	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	687	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
335	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	511	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	688	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
336	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	512	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	689	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
337	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	513	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	690	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
338	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	514	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	691	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
339	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	515	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	692	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
340	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	516	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	693	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
341	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	517	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	694	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
342	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	518	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	695	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
343	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	519	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	696	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
344	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	520	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	697	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
345	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	521	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	698	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
346	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	522	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	699	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
347	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	523	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	700	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
348	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	524	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	701	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
349	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	525	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	702	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
350	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	526	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	703	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
351	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	527	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	704	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
352	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	528	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	705	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
353	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	529	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	706	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
354	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	530	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	707	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
355	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	531	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	708	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
356	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	532	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	709	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
357	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	533	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	710	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
358	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	534	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	711	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
359	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	535	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	712	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
360	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	536	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	713	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
361	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	537	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	714	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
362	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	538	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	715	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
363	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	539	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	716	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
364	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	540	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	717	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
365	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	541	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	718	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
366	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	542	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	719	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
367	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4	543	Wright	MID	0	1	5	3	8	2.2	720	Palmer	LIV	0	2	22	29	51	3.0
368	Wright	MID	0	0	2	2	0.4																		

market report / shares

Pre-election bid speculation finds a focus in BG

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

As the election campaign got under way the stock market cast around for possible corporate activity to provide some action in the run up to polling day.

BG, the pipeline and exploration and production side of the split British Gas, emerged as the initial favourite for takeover attention.

In often brisk trading its shares, already regarded as wantonly overpriced by many analysts, jumped 5p to 173.5p. Shell, often rumoured as being interested in British Gas before the break-up, was said to be lining up a deal. The generators, National Power and PowerGen, and assorted US groups were also put in the frame.

The Gas story, in one form or another, is, if nothing else, displaying remarkable resilience. Despite the poison pill of its deep-rooted and far reaching difficulties, rumours

of corporate action refuse to die down. The demerger, producing BG and Centrica, has, however, freed BG from many of the old problems and its extensive gas and oil operations could certainly be of interest to a group like Shell.

Centrica, too, has been subjected to bid speculation but the appeal of the gas distribution arm has faded and its shares, off 0.75p at 60.25p, are bumping along at their low.

Shell, in a firm oil sector, rose 6.5p to 1.089.5p and British Petroleum, as a US securities firm called First Albany said buy, added 6.5p to 709.5p.

Lasmo, with Pakistan strike hopes resurfacing, gained 4.5p to 256p and JKA Oil and Gas flared 12.5p to 46p.



once again evidence of small investors locking in some of their profits from the bull run with private client stockbrokers often busy.

The possibility of a Labour windfall tax failed to dampen British Steel, up 4.5p to 158.25p; the planned merger between the German Thyssen and Krupp steel groups, was seen as likely to lead to firmer prices. Railtrack was another without a windfall care - up 3.5p to 464.5p. But Labour's tax proposal was not totally ignored; BAA, the airports group, fell 13.5p to 507.5p and ScottishPower dimmed 5.5p to 349p.

Resters, probably weighed

down by its big US involvement, fell to a new 12-month low - off 11.5p to 628.5p. Reed International, rumoured to be in the information group's sights, also gave ground, off 10p at 1.165p.

Canab Pharmaceuticals was the latest to find it is better to travel than arrive. Its long-rumoured vaccine link with Glaxo Wellcome was finally confirmed and high flying Canab promptly fell 60p from its 1.072.5p peak. Shield Diagnostic slipped 12.5p to 660p.

Reports of a price war in the music market, with Tesco and Safeway cutting album prices, sent WB Smith and EMI into

a spin. Smith lost 19.5p to 459.5p and EMI 15p to 1.165p. Imperial Chemical Industries remained under the whip of the Kleinwort Benson downgrading, falling a further 15p to 716.5p.

Rolls-Royce slipped 1.5p to 241.5p. Overseas shareholders now account for 29.34 per cent of the shares; if the 29.5 per cent ceiling is breached there will be forced selling.

Limelight, the bathroom and kitchen group, had that plug-hole feeling with the shares slipping 35p lower to 107.5p as it confirmed rumours of dismal trading. Dorling Kindersley, the reference book and CD-ROM publisher, lost 51p to 270p as the strong pound was blamed for an expected year's profit fall.

The plight of another CD-ROM group, Epic Multimedia, worsened with the shares, floated at 105p in May, losing 25 per cent of their value and

falling to a 9p low. The company produced a stark profit warning last month when it closed four fifths of its publishing arm, which represented £1.7m of the group's £4.2m turnover, and parted from with four directors.

Card Clear, the credit card protection group, put on 2p to 47p; it is buying a US company specialising in the prevention of telecom credit card fraud. Tomorrow CC plans a presentation to institutions.

Flextech, fresh from its deal with the BBC, slumped 64.5p to 686.5p as the market fretted about director share sales.

Hay & Robertson fell 17p to 127.5p. A few weeks ago the shares touched 178.5p. At last month's shareholders meeting the company, which has merchandising links with Terry Venables and Ruks with Gullit as well as the Football Association, made an upbeat trading statement.

Flodding hotel company Hanover International firmed 2p to 149.5p on talk of a possible takeover bid. Put together by Peter Eyles, who used to run Norfolk Capital, it has seven hotels, most acquired from a French finance house which repossessed them during the recession. Thistle Hotels, 2p lower at 185.5p, is rumoured to have an acquisition in its sights. Hanover is capitalised at £26m.

Eleco, making building materials, gained 2p to 15p, despite an increased half-year loss of £1.56m. New chairman John Kettleley is accelerating the property disposal programme to reduce borrowings.

Berkeley Playhouse, developing a table-dancing club in London's West End, arrived on Ofex, moving from 100p to 103p.

Taking Stock

Data Bank

FTSE 100	4356.8	16.5
FTSE 250	4081.5	30.5
FTSE 350	2153.6	9.5
SEAO VOLUME	836.7m	shares
61,746	turnovers	
GHS Index	94.58	0.15

Share spotlight

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: ex rights x Ex dividend as Ex at U United Securities Market a Suspended on Party Paid pm Nil Paid Shares 4 AM Stock Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 091 233 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial results dial 091 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 - Real-time	00	Starting Rates	04	Privatisation Issues	36
UK Stock Market Report	01	Banking Report	05	Water Shares	37
UK Company News	02	Wol St Report	06	Electricity Shares	38
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	07	High Street Banks	40

Anyone with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 091 233 333. For assistance, call the helpline 091 4376 (9.00am - 5.00pm). Call cost 50p per minute. Call charges include VAT.

Support Services

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Property

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Telecommunications

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Textiles & Apparel

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Retailers, Food

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Retailers, General

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Pharmaceuticals

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Printing & Paper

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Transport

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Water

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

HOW CAN I MAKE the most of my savings and investments?

TURN TO Your Money

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Company	Price	Change
British Gas	173.5	+5.0
Shell	1089.5	+6.5
British Petroleum	709.5	+6.5
Lasmo	256	+4.5
JKA Oil and Gas	46	+12.5

Search	Get	Buy	Ytd	Block
ABN AMRO Pensioen Ltd 27-41 Beckton Road, London WC1R 4JH Telephone & Fax: 0171 873 2234 Pensions at Growth	25.55	275.29	1.13	Cashier Fund Acc CU Money (only Gearing) Mkt Europe Unit Trust Consolidated Unit Trst Mktg

[illegible]

STERLING	DOLLAR
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Country	Starting	Dollar	Country	Starting	Dollar
Argentina	1.0000	0.8986	Algeria	130.750	\$6.4200
Brazil	18.7896	11.6116	Austria	0.8119	0.9620
Brazil	1.8892	1.0000	Bahamas	8.7000	0.9620
Brazil	2.2513	1.0000	Bahamas	41.8626	26.3520
Canada	0.9101	0.9099	Barbados	266.525	1.0000
France	0.4156	3.3909	Belgium	5.7941	3.8410
France	0.0829	0.0829	Belize	507.28	5709.00
France	0.1250	1872.00	Belize	7.017	4.4180
Germany	0.4543	284.570	Botswana	44.7721	27.5400
Greece	0.2500	0.2500	Brazil	5.8995	3.6740
Hong Kong	0.4829	0.3035	Canada		

Note: Forward rates quoted here to two and six or different quoted rates are based on the current spot rates and spot rates. For the latest rates, please refer to our weekly publication, "Foreign Exchange Rates and Spot Rates."

£ Buys	2
Australia(Dollars)	1.9600

Austria (Schilling)	18.3400	Germany (Mark)	2.2000	Portugal (Escudo)	202.0000
Belgium (Franc)	53.7700	Greece (Drachma)	413.0000	Spain (Peseta)	220.0000
Canada (Dollar)	2.1230	Hong Kong (Dollar)	11.9500	Sweden (Krona)	12.0100
Cyprus (Pound)	0.7015	Ireland (Punt)	0.9875	Switzerland (Franc)	2.2500
Denmark (Krone)	10.0200	Italy (Lira)	2033.0000	Turkey (Lira)	193.70.0000
Holland (Guilder)	2.5200	Japan (Yen)	192.2000	United States (Dollar)	1.5590
Poland (Zloty)	2.0000	Malaya (Ring)	0.0980		

UK Base	8.00%	Germany Discount
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France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgian	
Intervention	3.15%	Canada		Fed Funds	3.25%	Discount	2.50%
Italy		Prime	4.75%	Spain		Central	3.00%
Discount	7.5%	Discount	5.00%	10-Day Repo	6.00%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.70%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Par)	4.10%	Lombard	4 1/2%

Country	5 yr	Yield %
UK ^a	7.8%	7.10

US	8.25%	6.54	6.53%	6.72	Spain	7.3%	6.35	7.3%	7.4
Japan	6.0%	7.53	2.9%	2.54	Italy	7.75%	7.52	7.75%	7.92
Australia	10.0%	7.80	8.75%	7.95	Belgium	9.0%	4.78	6.25%	6.04
Germany	8.0%	4.84	6.0%	6.90	Sweden	13.0%	6.21	6.50%	7.41
France	8.5%	4.88	5.5%	6.78	ECU OAT	6.0%	5.18	5.50%	6.41

Sources: HSBC Markets Research Yields calculated on local basis ** Derivative swap benchmark

	O'Night	7 Day	1 Mo
Interbank	5 3/4 6 1/4	5 1/2 6	5 3/4

Shilling CDs	-	-	6.22	6.7	6%	6.7
Local Authority Depos	5%	5%	-	6.7	6%	6.7
Discount Market Depos	5.25	5.25	-	-	-	-
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	6	6.75	-	-
Dollar CDs	-	-	5.09	6.16	5.28	5.54
ECU Linked Dep	-	-	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7

Contract	Settlement price	High for
Long Gas	110.28	111.27

German Govt	Jun 97	100.41	101.81	100.15	227296	252360
German Govt	Jul 97	100.45	102.68	154.08	7659	7659
3 Mth Euribor	Jun 97	93.74	93.73	93.73	7775	130221
3 Mth Euribor	Jul 97	93.73	93.74	93.73	9475	157135
3 Mth Euribor	Jun 97	92.54	92.52	92.53	207452	207452
3 Mth Euribor	Jul 97	92.52	92.52	92.53	9474	49336
3 Mth Euribor	Jun 97	92.52	92.52	92.53	3679	11359
3 Mth ECU	Jun 97	98.13	98.15	98.13	547	36252
3 Mth ECU	Jul 97	98.15	98.16	98.14	1915	12398
FTSE 100	Jun 97	4388.0	4407.0	4358.0	17822	33063
FTSE 100	Jul 97	4700.0	4710.0	4700.0	1420	4487

Series	4300	4350
Mar	66 1/4	27/15

Apr	101/40	68/58	43/63	24/115	--
May	139/70	108/91	81/112	58/139	--
Jun	173/92	141/110	112/132	67/158	110/161

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London
\$/tonne **Cash**

[illegible]

LIFE	Chomsky	LIFE	Shore
Mar	1975	Mar	1975

May	1033	May	1038	May	97.10	Apr	10.30
Jul	1039	Jul	1085	Jul	98.50	Apr	11.20
Vol	12341	Vol	5099	Vol	33	Vol	12,80
White Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn	
LIFFE \$/tonne		LIFFE \$/bushel pt		LIFFE \$/tonne		CBOT#	1200 Price
May	356.3	Feb	Mar	101.15		H-L	Settle
Aug	355.2	Jul	102.00	Mar	389.5-395.0		390.0
Oct	371.7	Vol	1550	Jul	386.5-391.0		384.25
Vol	949	Index	1480	Vol	876	Jul	394.75-399.0
							392.75

May	Cotton (NY)	USCent/b
unq	Wool	Acens/kg

Energy		Brent Crude		Gasoil		WTI		Products		Europe	
Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
\$/bbl	52.30	\$/bbl	48.14	\$/bbl	48.14	\$/bbl	48.14	\$/bbl	48.14	\$/bbl	48.14
\$/bbl	21.24	\$/bbl	21.24	\$/bbl	21.24	\$/bbl	21.24	\$/bbl	21.24	\$/bbl	21.24
\$/bbl	19.80	\$/bbl	19.80	\$/bbl	19.80	\$/bbl	19.80	\$/bbl	19.80	\$/bbl	19.80
\$/bbl	18.57	\$/bbl	18.57	\$/bbl	18.57	\$/bbl	18.57	\$/bbl	18.57	\$/bbl	18.57
Vol. 39989		Vol. 19.80		Vol. 19.80		Vol. 19.80		Vol. 19.80		Vol. 19.80	

GSCI Index	Base date	+1
Index	1970=100	16
Adjusted	1970=100	-1

Aggregates	1970=100	259.56	-1.57	231.28			
Energy	1983=100	67.534	-1.96	65.85	+9.27	281.18	-10.14
Industrial Metals	1977=100	187.16	-0.11	186.79	-21.00	68.14	-0.46
Livestock	1970=100	188.87	+0.35	191.03	+10.88	188.21	-0.58
Precious Metals	1973=100	448.75	-1.23	463.54	-1.13	165.61	+1.78
					-3.78	527.17	-11.51

Source: Goldman Sachs & Co. *1983 is a base year for aggregates and livestock.

200 Largest Insurance Funds

[illegible]

Canada Managed Ser 2	884.0	882.6	Flyer Ltd Int'l	4
CMFid Equity	430.5	430.5	Flyer Scottish Growth Managed	2
CMFid Supp/Mixed	355.6	353.2	Flyer Scottish UK Equity	2
CMFid Growth Fund		375.4	Franklin American Equity Ser 1	4

Comprehension Eggs 1	110.9	110.8	Comprehension Eggs 2	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 3	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 4	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 5	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 6	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 7	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 8	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 9	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 10	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 11	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 12	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 13	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 14	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 15	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 16	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 17	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 18	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 19	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 20	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 21	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 22	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 23	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 24	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 25	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 26	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 27	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 28	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 29	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 30	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 31	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 32	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 33	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 34	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 35	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 36	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 37	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 38	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 39	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 40	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 41	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 42	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 43	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 44	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 45	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 46	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 47	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 48	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 49	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 50	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 51	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 52	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 53	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 54	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 55	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 56	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 57	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 58	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 59	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 60	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 61	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 62	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 63	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 64	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 65	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 66	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 67	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 68	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 69	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 70	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 71	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 72	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 73	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 74	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 75	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 76	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 77	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 78	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 79	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 80	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 81	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 82	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 83	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 84	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 85	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 86	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 87	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 88	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 89	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 90	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 91	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 92	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 93	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 94	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 95	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 96	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 97	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 98	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 99	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 100	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 101	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 102	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 103	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 104	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 105	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 106	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 107	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 108	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 109	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 110	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 111	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 112	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 113	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 114	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 115	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 116	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 117	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 118	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 119	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 120	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 121	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 122	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 123	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 124	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 125	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 126	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 127	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 128	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 129	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 130	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 131	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 132	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 133	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 134	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 135	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 136	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 137	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 138	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 139	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 140	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 141	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 142	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 143	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 144	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 145	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 146	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 147	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 148	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 149	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 150	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 151	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 152	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 153	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 154	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 155	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 156	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 157	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 158	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 159	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 160	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 161	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 162	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 163	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 164	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 165	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 166	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 167	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 168	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 169	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 170	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 171	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 172	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 173	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 174	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 175	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 176	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 177	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 178	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 179	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 180	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 181	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 182	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 183	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 184	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 185	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 186	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 187	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 188	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 189	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 190	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 191	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 192	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 193	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 194	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 195	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 196	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 197	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 198	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 199	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 200	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 201	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 202	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 203	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 204	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 205	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 206	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 207	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 208	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 209	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 210	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 211	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 212	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 213	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 214	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 215	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 216	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 217	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 218	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 219	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 220	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 221	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 222	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 223	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 224	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 225	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 226	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 227	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 228	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 229	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 230	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 231	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 232	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 233	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 234	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 235	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 236	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 237	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 238	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 239	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 240	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 241	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 242	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 243	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 244	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 245	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 246	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 247	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 248	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 249	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 250	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 251	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 252	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 253	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 254	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 255	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 256	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 257	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 258	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 259	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 260	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 261	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 262	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 263	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 264	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 265	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 266	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 267	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 268	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 269	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 270	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 271	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 272	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 273	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 274	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 275	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 276	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 277	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 278	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 279	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 280	97.7	97.7
Comprehension Eggs 281	97.7	97.7	Comprehension Eggs 282	97.7	97.7
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For more information contact Andrew Hunt on +44 171 825 8420, or email: info@fhl.com



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Pigott orchestrates a seaside revolution

Sussex may be beside the sea, but the county's cricket is on the rocks and a growing number of members want major changes at the top.

The exodus of half a dozen players and the feeling that the club's administration is not up to scratch has prompted Tony Pigott, the former Sussex bowler, to lead a rebellion which will seek to clear out long-standing committee members, including Ken Hopkins, the recently elected chairman.

A motion of no confidence will be put to a special general meeting on 8 April in Hove Town Hall, but prior to that this evening's annual meeting, in the refurbished splendour of the IRA-bombed Grand Hotel, promises to be a lively affair.

The 38-year-old Pigott, who has given up the post of second team coach at Surrey in an attempt to salvage the club where his seam bowling accounted for 621 first-class wickets, is confident that he can win enough support before the special

meeting to build up the two-thirds majority which would enable him and his supporters to take over.

The club's constitution prohibits a vote tonight, but Pigott, who left the county after 18 years at Hove and joined Surrey in 1994, said: "I have put my head on the block, now it is up to the members. If they want this strongly enough then they must take the opportunity at the AGM to say something."

Hopkins met Pigott on Tuesday and they, in Pigott's words, "agreed to disagree". Hopkins has promised to fight the vote of no confidence and in a letter to members he says: "Such a vote would be disastrous for the club. It would threaten the work that is in progress, [and] put players and staff in a position of uncertainty."

However, Hopkins last night insisted he would welcome fresh faces on the committee. "New blood is always a good thing," he said.

The resignation at the beginning of the month of the chairman, Alan Caffyn, after he had heaped blame for much of the county's troubles on the former captain Alan Wells was followed by that of Richard Barrow (now in the Pigott camp). The departures reduced the committee from nine members to seven.

A postal ballot last week saw the former captain Robin Marlar, Jim May, and Dick Holste elected and all three support Pigott. Of the four remaining, Hopkins, the vice-chairman Alan Wadey and Frank Horan are all opposed to the rebels, while the England tour manager, John Barclay, is said to be undecided. Informed sources, however, expect him to come out against Pigott.

When asked if Sussex needed a revolution on top of everything else that has happened in the last year, Pigott replied: "Did Surrey need one two years ago? The answer is 'Yes'. In Surrey's case the members stood up and were counted. It was amazing how quickly things turned around after that and I believe the same thing could happen at Sussex."

The fact that the club have made a profit in each of the last 10 seasons is clearly not a factor. It is the departure of talented players, "I was sad more than surprised," he said. "I've seen it happen before in 1985, 1986 and 1987, then they lost seven or eight capped players. Sadly it has been allowed to happen again."

Of the six capped players to leave, Ed Giddins was dismissed after being banned by the Test and County Cricket Board for testing positive for cocaine. Jamie Hall was released, while Wells, Ian Salisbury, Danny Law and Speight left for varied reasons.

Hopkins' view is that the departures were due in part to a lack of confidence between the players and the captain. Wells, "I do not subscribe to the view that it is all the captain's fault," he said, "but when you don't play as well as you should you don't win things and that is when things start to go wrong."

Pigott wants to put it right. "I don't believe the communication is very good at Hove, nor the man management. You can push Sussex forward if everyone is working together."

Pigott insists there would be no impetuous moves on the player front. "I don't know about the quality of the playing staff," he said, "but the new committee would not go in and get rid of people. The last thing we need is to lose any more players. It will be like moving houses; you don't immediately dig up the garden, you wait to see what is growing there."

David Llewellyn reports on the unrest at Sussex which should come to a head at tonight's annual meeting

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Williams guides W Indies to safety

TONY COZIER

reports from Port of Spain West Indies 296 & 255-4 India 436

Stuart Williams led the West Indies to safety and then completed his maiden Test hundred as the second Test hundred drifted towards a draw on the final day yesterday. Trailing by 140 the West Indies had virtually reached certain comfort at 118 for 1 overnight and advanced to 255 for 4 a quarter of an hour before tea.

Williams, 33, when play began, arrived at his landmark with an edged leg glance off the fast bowler Akeem Kurellwa two balls before lunch. He had taken five hours 55 minutes of diligent application getting there and, with the outcome of the match all but settled, lost patience and skied a catch to long-on off the left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi. He had been in for seven and a half hours without making an error. He added 176 for the second wicket with Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who made 74.

Chanderpaul's departure made way for Brian Lara, but the Prince of Port of Spain took over an hour and 57 balls to scratch 19 and then was caught at slip by a fizzing, bouncing top-spinner from Anil Kumble.

First day's Test scores were: WEST INDIES - First Innings 296 (R. Hadar 91, C. Williams 104); INDIA - First Innings 436 (S. Tendulkar 201, R. S. Gavaskar 57, S. P. Tendulkar 58, C. E. Ambrose 57); WEST INDIES - Second Innings 118 (for 1); INDIA - Second Innings 102 (for 2); WEST INDIES - Third Innings 255 (for 4); INDIA - Third Innings 118 (for 2).

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Illingworth must mind his own business

Raymond Illingworth, the former chairman of England selectors, has been told not to interfere in the present selectors' business as they choose the man to captain England against Australia this summer.

The three selectors, David Graveney, Mike Gatting and Graham Gough, will select a skipper over the next couple of weeks, with Mike Atherton the strong favourite. However, that has not prevented Illingworth from telling his successors, Graveney, to displace with Atherton's services for the one-day internationals before the Ashes. Illingworth believes Atherton's leadership of the England side has "never been truly convincing", and that he should be replaced by Nasser Hussain, vice-captain on the winter tour, or Adam Hildreth, the A team skipper.

That advice brought an immediate rebuke from Graveney, who said: "Ray's got his view and I respect that. He's made a great contribution, but now the three of us have been appointed and it is up to us to find what is the right course to take."

Henman poised to carry off his own Brit award

John Roberts reports from Key Biscayne on tennis's answer to the Oscars

When tennis's answer to the Oscars takes place tonight at the Jackie Gleason Theatre, Miami Beach, Tim Henman's nomination will provide further evidence that there is colour in the cheeks of the English patient.

Whether or not the 22-year-old from Oxford outpaces his rivals for the ATP Tour's Most Improved Player of the Year Award for 1996, Felix Mantilla, of Spain, and the American Alex O'Brien, the Lawn Tennis Association can take encouragement.

The ceremonies are being held on the eve of the Lipton Championships across the bay at Key Biscayne. Not long ago it would have been a treat to see the name of a British player in a main draw, never mind seeded and shortlisted to be honoured by his peers.

It is the first occasion that the men's ATP Tour and the women's WTA Tour have held a joint awards gala, and it will make a pleasant change to hear praise for a British competitor prior to the traditional opening of an envelope.

Winners of the ATP Tour's Most Improved Player Award tend to do rather well. Their number includes John McEnroe (1978), Ivan Lendl (1981), Boris Becker (1985), Andre Agassi (1988), Michael Chang (1989) and Pete Sampras (1990).

Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the re-

cent for 1994, went on to become the first Russian to win a Grand Slam singles title at the French Open last June. Thomas Enqvist, winner of the award for 1995, performed heroically for Sweden even though his career year was defeated by France, 3-2, in a breathtakingly exciting Davis Cup final last December.

However, any urge to stream "the British are coming!" should be suppressed. It might be premature and potentially embarrassing, especially with so many Waterford Crystal trophies on display.

Pete Sampras, for example, will be presented with a fourth consecutive ATP Tour Player of the Year Award as the world No 1 and will also receive an ATP Tour Milestone Award to mark his 40th title (he is now only three short of the 50th).

Henman has continued to build on the progress he made last year, the highlight of which was an appearance in the Wimbledon quarter-finals. So far in 1997, the 22-year-old from Oxford has won his first ATP Tour singles title, in Sydney, finished runner-up in two others, in Doha and Antwerp, and has achieved his highest world ranking, No 14 (he is currently No 16).

"When I played Henman a

couple of years ago at Wimbledon," Sampras recalled, "I thought he had a very solid game. He just needed to fill out a little bit physically and get a little stronger. He's obviously done that. He's got a game that reminds me a lot of Edberg - real nice backhand, moves very well, has a good head on his shoulders. The way he's playing, it seems like he's going to be around for a lot of years."

Greg Rusedski, inspired - or spurred - by Henman's success, raised his game and advanced to successive finals, losing controversially to Goran Ivanisevic in Zagreb and retiring hurt in San Jose after winning the opening set against Sampras, having defeated Chang and Andre Agassi back-to-back.

"Greg's game has been steadily improving," Chang said. "He relies so much on his serve. I think that on particular days, when he's serving extremely well, he's going to be very, very dangerous, particularly against top players, and on days when he doesn't serve very well he's going to struggle a little bit. So that's really the backbone of his game."

The combination of a wrist injury and a virus infection subsequently put Rusedski on the

sidelines, but he returned to action indoors in Europe this week, competing at St Petersburg, but yesterday was forced to pull out of the event after aggravating his wrist and may be doubtful for Britain's Davis Cup match against Zimbabwe at Crystal Palace next month. He is currently ranked No 37. A swollen right elbow caused Henman to miss last week's tournament at Indian Wells, California, but he is back for the Lipton.

"Tennis in England, I think, is going to be very bright," Sampras said, adding a proviso. "There's a lot of things that those two guys, especially Henman, has to deal with, and that's the media, the expectations. Now he's coming up, he's going out with nothing to lose. There's going to come a time when people are going to expect him to win."

Steffi Graf's three Grand Slam titles (the French, Wimbledon and United States championships) virtually guarantee her an eighth WTA Tour Player of the Year Award.

The only other nomination in this category is Martina Hingis, the Swiss 16-year-old who will become the youngest-ever world No 1 when she overtakes the injured Graf on 31 March. Hingis is one of three finalists for two other awards, Most Improved Player of the Year and Doubles Team of the Year (with Helena Sukova).

Mansell loses none of his old drive



Nigel Mansell plays the 11th at Sunningdale yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Edwards prepares to take on the world

Sailing
STUART ALEXANDER

A triple challenge in a giant twin-hulled catamaran saw the return of Sir Peter Edwards to high-profile sailing yesterday. Backed by a £4.25m sponsorship package from Royal & Sun Alliance, the former skipper of the

Whitbread yacht Maiden will again use an all-woman crew, first to make an attempt in late May on a west-east trans-Atlantic record and then, at the end of July, on the Round Britain and Ireland record.

But all that is merely a pipe-opener for the main event, a tilt early next January at the Jules Verne Trophy for the fastest,

non-stop circumnavigation of the world, the route going down and up the Atlantic and round the Antarctic.

The boat she has chosen already holds that record. Sir Peter Blake and Sir Robin Knox-Johnston set a time of 74 days 22hrs 17mins 22secs in 1994 in the 92ft Enza. Now, after a refitting programme under the

direction of one of the members of that Enza crew, Ed Dantley, Edwards hopes to clip two days off the record.

Garrards, the designers and makers in 1951 of the 100 Guinea Trophy, which became the America's Cup, believe it can be restored in six weeks following its battering with a brick hammer by a protester in Auckland.

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A dream in decline
David Winner on life after
Bosman for Ajax, page 26

sport

Tennis Oscars
John Roberts on
Henman's progress, page 26

Premiership clubs join queue for Klinsmann

Football

NICK DUXBURY

English clubs were licking their lips yesterday at the prospect of Jürgen Klinsmann ending his career back in the Premiership.

The former Tottenham Hotspur striker announced that he is to give up his lucrative contract at Bayern Munich after talks with the club's chairman, Franz Beckenbauer.

"I told him that I would

probably play abroad next season," the 32-year-old German international said. "I don't fit in here. I wanted to tell Bayern now so that they can plan for the future. There are many reasons [why I am leaving] and I have decided to act."

As well as interest here, clubs in Spain and Italy will also be on the alert and there is the possibility that his swan-song could be played out in the United States.

Klinsmann, who captained Germany to victory at last year's

European Championship, returned to his homeland in 1995 after a successful spell with Spurs during which he was voted England's Footballer of the Year and was a hugely popular figure with the fans.

He complained earlier in the season that he was unhappy with Bayern's defensive tactics and the way he had been treated when his form dipped. He has often been at odds with the club's captain, Lothar Matthäus, his predecessor in charge of the national team and

has found it difficult to cope with the squabbling which is part of everyday life at Bayern.

"It was obvious that the whole ballyhoo in Munich got on Jürgen's nerves," the Bayern general manager, Uli Hoeness, said. "He has said that himself many times."

Queen's Park Rangers are ready to report Sampdoria to the governing body of world football, Fifa, over their free transfer signing of Danny Dichio. The striker will sign a three-year contract when his current deal expires at the end of the season.

Players are allowed to arrange a move six months before a contract ends, but Rangers claim that Sampdoria broke the rules by not informing them that negotiations were in progress.

Tony Yeboah will be fined a fortnight's pay for ripping off his Leeds United shirt and throwing it at his manager, George Graham, after being substituted during Saturday's defeat at Tottenham.

"George will be disciplining him with a fine which is expected to be around two weeks' wages," the club's secretary, Nigel Pleasants, said yesterday. He declined to say how much Yeboah was paid.

Arsenal have signed the 19-year-old keeper Alexander Manninger from the Austrian club Casino Graz after a two-day trial at Highbury. The fee is believed to be around £500,000.

The Leicester keeper Kasey Keller could lose his Coca-Cola Cup final place because of his World Cup commitments with the United States. Keller, who was unavailable for last Saturday's game with Middlesbrough, is also ruled out of today's home match with Tottenham and the weekend encounter at Southampton. The Bournemouth keeper, Ian Andrews, has been signed on loan for a month as cover for Keller.

The Football Association has dismissed reports that negotiations aimed at ending the damaging feud between Peter Schmeichel and Ian Wright have broken down.

It has been claimed that legal advisors acting on behalf of Schmeichel had informed the FA that the Manchester United goalkeeper had rejected the offer of a reconciliation meeting with the Arsenal striker Wright.

An FA spokesman, Steve Double, insisted that the content of negotiations remained confidential, but added: "We don't accept that Peter Schmeichel has snubbed the peace offer. Schmeichel has rejected accusations of racism after clashing with Wright twice this season."

Di Canio banned for derby incident

Paolo Di Canio of Celtic has been given a one-match ban following incidents after the Old Firm game on Sunday. The Italian was given the punishment by the Scottish Football Association, who acted on referee Hugh Dallas' report into the game with Rangers.

Di Canio was shown the yellow card after he squared up to Ian Ferguson following the final whistle at Parkhead, which technically added up to a sending-off for the former Milan player, after an earlier booking during the game.

Di Canio, likely to be fined £12,000 in wages by Celtic, will have to sit on the sidelines for Saturday's League match with Dunfermline at East End Park.

An inquiry into the events at Parkhead looks set to be ordered by the chief executive of the SFA, Jim Farry, and the likelihood is that Di Canio, Mark Hateley, the Rangers striker who was sent off for a head-butt, and possibly the managers of both teams could be called to appear before the SFA's next disciplinary committee.

An SFA spokesman said: "Di Canio was mentioned in the referee's report for having committed an offence which was the equivalent of a caution. Since he also received one during the match, the player is automatically suspended from the next match."

Meanwhile, Tommy Burns, the Celtic manager, has dismissed speculation Di Canio is ready to leave Glasgow and move to the Premiership. "This is absolute rubbish," Burns said. "Paolo is under contract and has never said anything, other than how much it means to him to be a Celtic player."

Rangers have also been caught up in a flurry of trans-

fer stories, with reports in Glasgow claiming the Ibrox club are ready to bring back their former striker Duncan Ferguson from Everton.

The controversial Scotland international was sold to Goodison Park over two years ago for £4.5m, but Everton's manager Joe Royle has apparently become disillusioned with the injury-prone striker, who has scored only nine times this season. However, Ferguson's last spell in Glasgow ended with him receiving a jail sentence for his behaviour on and off the pitch and it is debatable whether he would want to return.

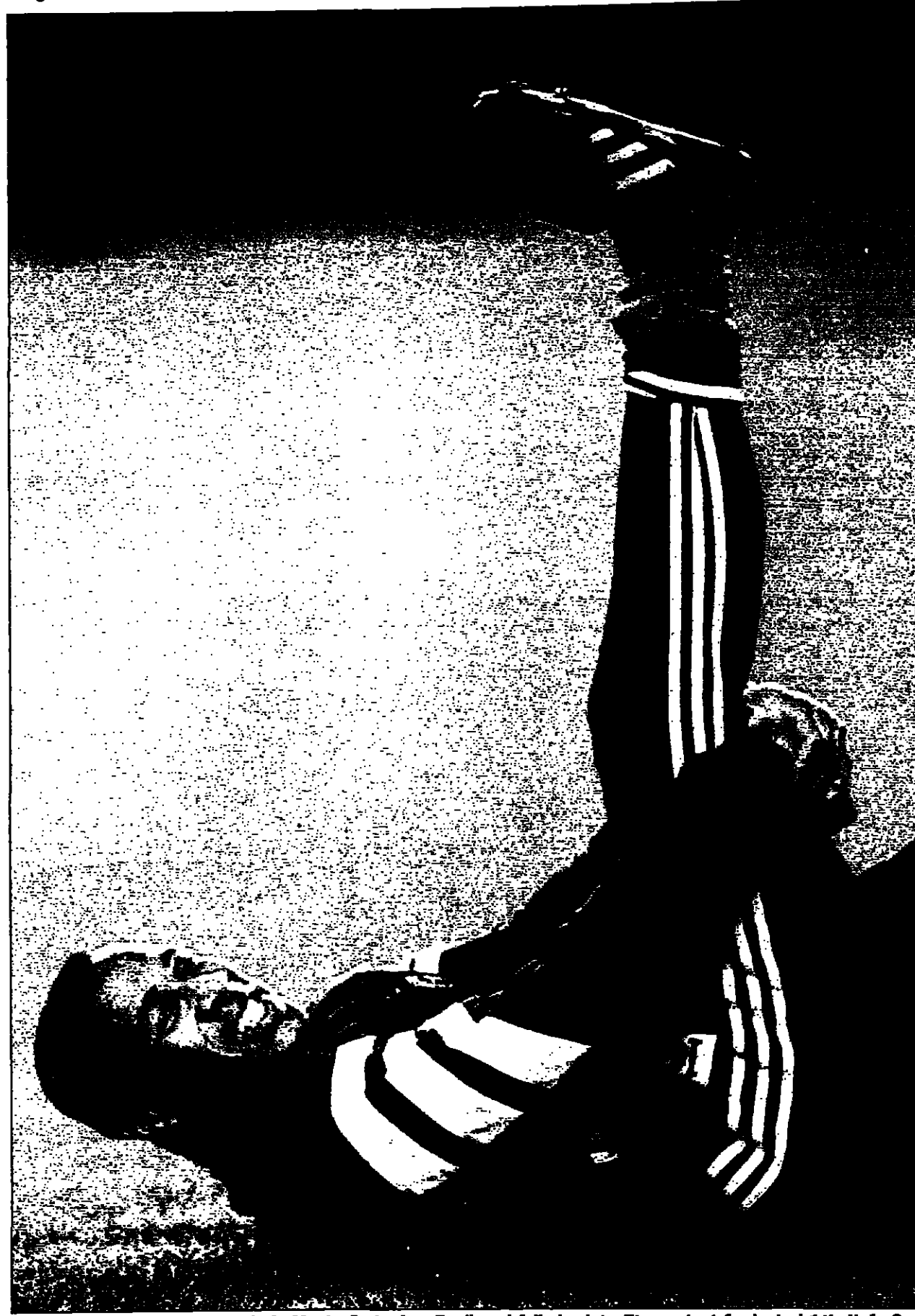
South of the border, David Buss, the Coventry defender whose career was ended a year ago by injury, has been assured of a good benefit match by Manchester United.

Buss suffered horrific leg injuries playing for Coventry at Old Trafford last Easter, and Alex Ferguson, the United manager, has agreed to send a United side to play a Coventry City XI in a benefit at Highfield Road on 16 May.

Rangers' Ally McCoist and Paul Gascoigne have agreed to play and the England manager, Glenn Hoddle, will also take part.

Buss, who has undergone 15 operations on his leg, had to announce his retirement from the game on medical grounds. He expects a full-house 23,500 at Highfield Road for the game.

Buss's agent, Murdo Mackay, said: "We have had so many offers from top players that we could almost field 50-a-side. A lot of people were affected by David's injury, but they all respect the way he has handled it. We want to make it a night for him to remember."



Despite training with Newcastle in Monte Carlo, Les Ferdinand failed a late fitness test for last night's UEFA Cup match against Monaco. The French league side held a 1-0 lead from the first leg. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

Boro begin countdown to survival

Middlesbrough embark on a crucial eight-day survival period on and off the field when they take on Blackburn at the Riverside Stadium tonight.

Middlesbrough, who could move off the bottom if Southampton slip up at Chelsea, follow up with further home games against Chelsea on Saturday and Nottingham Forest on Monday.

Two days later they face a Football Association appeal panel in the hope of winning back the three points deducted for their failure to fulfil their away date with Blackburn earlier in the season.

The significance of the next few days is not lost on their manager, Bryan Robson. He said: "The next three games could shape the rest of the season for us. We, like Blackburn, have improved since the turn of the year. Top quality players were missing at one stage, but they have made a difference on their return."

"They have risen to the challenge. Now we have to build on that. The confidence among the players is sky high and the lads are buoyant, but they will have to work hard."

Following 6-1 and 3-1 wins over Derby and Leicester respectively, Boro are looking for a third straight win for the first time since September and are boosted by the news Gianluca Festa, Nigel Pearson, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Emerson are all fully fit after an outbreak of food poisoning.

Blackburn will have their leading scorer Chris Sutton available again after a five-match injury absence. Their caretaker manager, Tony Parkes, must decide whether to break up the Per Pedersen-Kevin Gallacher partnership which has produced six goals in Sutton's absence.

Second from bottom Southampton can forget any hope of a helping hand from the FA Cup semi-finalists Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, according to midfielder Craig Burley.

Chelsea are going flat out to secure a UEFA Cup place via the Premiership as an insurance against slipping up on the road to Wembley.

Scott Minto is suspended while Franck Leboeuf (thigh) and Andy Myers (shin) are injury doubts, but the former England defender Paul Parker is set to start his first game for the club after a 20-minute spell as a substitute in the 6-2 thrashing of Sunderland.

Southampton are without their in-form Norwegian international defender, Claus Lundekvam, who suffered a knee injury in the 2-0 home defeat by Arsenal. Ken Monkou or Francis Benali will replace him, while Matthew Oakley and Ulrich van Gobbel are available after suspension.

Graeme Souness, the Southampton manager who has set his side a survival target of five wins from the last nine games, admitted: "We have a hill to climb which is becoming a mountain. If the players are going to show they have the mettle, now is the time. We have our destiny in our own hands, and we have it all to play for - starting with Chelsea."

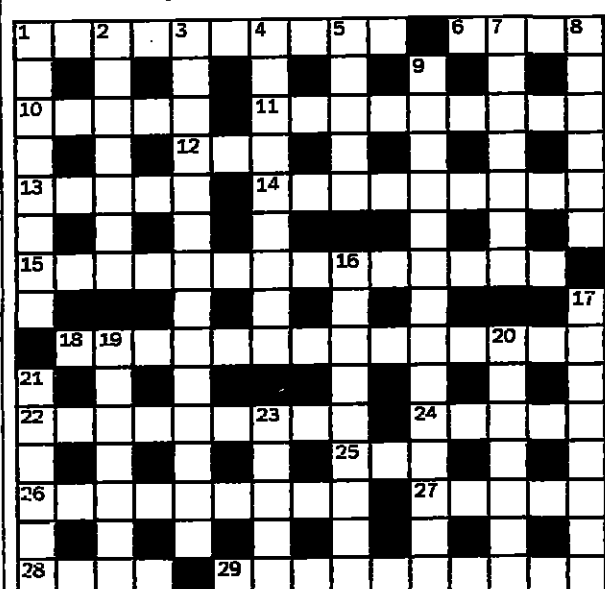
Jason Dozzell has set his sights on trying to win a new contract when his current four-year deal with Tottenham ends in the summer. Dozzell was the butt of the crowd's anger last week after squandering a golden chance against Forest, but he impressed in Saturday's win over Leeds. He is now waiting to see if he will retain his place as David Howells and Allan Nielsen are free from suspension for the match at Leicester.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3250, Wednesday 19 March

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- Swish heard, possibly, from domestic appliance (10)
 - Traffic in Southwest, a problem at first (4)
 - May love oak and thorn (5)
 - Messy, that setting of purple sapphires (9)
 - Unit of inner energy? (3)
 - Doctor breaking law with slow delivery (5)
 - Constitution of UN to agree the following (9)
 - Busy boss? (5,9)
 - Time for settlement of light bill? (3,2,9)
 - In favour of English style of antipasto? (9)
 - Daggers drawn in Nobel institution (5)
 - Shadow boxer? (3)
 - Abnormal case (9)
 - Mad, but not silly-headed - just goofy (5)
 - Tax on goods and service (4)
 - Role of the fly in destruction of *Eritacus rubecula* (10)
 - Still with no score, on is doomed to failure (4,4)
 - High voices heard on Paris roundabout (7)
 - It spins to produce a lot (5,2,7)
 - Not the front entrance to the Savoy, say? (5,4)
 - Adventure in the seventies (5)
 - Wl lass, a refined maker of toast? (7)
 - Advertisement for the big picture (6)
- DOWN**
- Joint-advisor, we hear, got the solarium prepared (14)
 - Badly scared, Jersey provided this venerated institution (6,3)
 - Unattractive aspect of hybrid fruit on head (8)
 - Fruit gone off to Capri? (7)
 - Repeat - to be well-read, Latin is not necessary (7)
 - Where plank-walker goes finally, hurt? (6)
 - Vagrant to stop around river (5)

Mansell revelling in his move from grid to green

Having checked out of his hotel yesterday morning, the first thing Nigel Mansell had to do after completing his first-round match in the 56th Sunningdale Foursomes was find a room for the night. Mansell and his partner, the aptly named John Putt, will be teeing up again today after beating the former Ryder Cup player Paul Way and Terry Crawley 3 and 2.

Mansell may have taken the advice of Michael King too literally. "You'll get thrashed," the former Tour player, inevitably known as "Queenie", had said. In fact, Mansell, who has a handicap of 26 at Woodbury Park, the course he owns near Exeter, had taken money off King and Sam Torrance in practice on Tuesday. A certain world No 1 was also involved in the build-up.

"I spoke to Greg Norman on the phone last night and he just said to stay focused," Mansell explained. "He is a great motivator. Greg got me going in golf in the early Eighties and we have a very good friendship."

Mansell settled after missing in the 1988 Australian Open at Royal Sydney before his Formula One world championship ambitions took over. Now, the reverse is true. "Unless someone gives me a car I can win in, I'm concentrating on golf this year. For the first time ever I'm free to play golf

Andy Farrell sees a former driver enjoy a foursomes win at Sunningdale

and I'm enjoying it. I am going to play as many events as I can."

This event is traditionally the start of the British season, bringing together an assorted collection of professionals and amateurs, both men and women. Mansell had chosen his partner well. Putt, a business consultant, is a Sunningdale member and was a professional when in 1973 he won the tournament, with Miss M Everard, beating two likely lads in Carl Mason and Howard Clark 6 and 5 in the final.

Under the sort of damp skies that three broken backs and a broken neck mean Mansell usually avoids by spending much of the winter in Florida and Spain, the first two holes were contrastingly halved in birdies and double-bogies. Mansell settled after missing a short putt at seven to hole from 20 at the next and then drove to the fringe at the short par-four ninth.

Way found a bunker off that tee and then hit a horrid hook for his approach at the next to lose a third successive hole. He

may not have been playing quite as poorly as his former Ryder Cup partner Seve Ballesteros, but he looked every inch a man who has lost his Tour card and failed at the qualifying school. Still only 34, he is hoping to get a few invitations to tournaments. At least he has not lost his sponsor, Crawley, who deals in futures in the city.

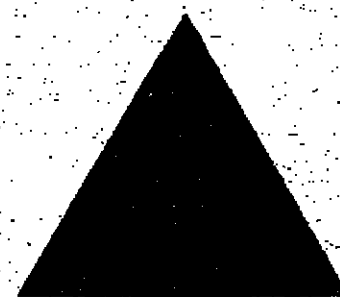
Presuming that they did not have much of one the way things were going, Crawley holed from 25 and 15 feet to get back to one down after 13, but the end came when Mansell holed from five feet at the 16th. "To play 16 holes in level par is good golf," Way said of the victors. "Nigel played well. It was a good game."

"I wasn't happy with the way I played, but I got it round," said Mansell, talking like a prototype golf pro. "Today was all about experience. I learnt a lot from watching how Queenie and Sam played the course yesterday - it is all course management."

The old drive is there, but swapping grid for green has clearly had a positive effect. "I can't believe how excited I get about golf. I've mellowed a lot in the last four or five years. Since Ayrton (Senna) died at Imola, I've looked at the perspective of sport differently."

Photograph, page 27

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And a beer to go with it.



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